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ST. AUGUSTINE:

A Biographical Memoir.

BY

THE REV. JOHN BAILLIE,

GONV. AND CAIUS COLL., CAMBRIDGE;

AUTHOR OF THE "LIFE OF ADELAIDE L. NEWTON," "MEMOIRS
OF HEWITSON," "LIFE STUDIES," ETC.

"No Doctor in the Church, after the Sacred Scriptures, is to be
compared to Augustine."—MARTIN LUTHER.

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1859.

1852

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TO
THE HON. AND REV.
SAMUEL WALDEGRAVE, M. A.,

Rector of Barford St. Martin, and Canon of Salisbury.

MY DEAR SIR.—The illustrious Church-father whose life is recorded in these pages, is not a stranger to you. In your Bampton Lectures, delivered some years ago before the University of Oxford, you worthily vindicated those great doctrines of grace in which St. Augustine gloried, and of which his personal life was so vivid a pattern. And I therefore inscribe this volume to you, assured that whatever abases the worm in the dust, and exalts and glorifies the God of grace, will meet from you a cordial welcome. Augustine was not perfect; but he was a “true man”—a meek and humble follower of the Lamb,—and, above all, he was a pastor who yearned over souls with a compassion which I know you feel to be the greatest of all wants in the ministry of our day. It is in the humble hope that God may use this book to quicken into new energy and devotedness some earnest souls, that I have sought to popularise the great preacher’s life, and now send it forth on its errand.

Believe me,

Your faithful Brother in our one Lord,

THE AUTHOR.

“Pectus est quod theologum facit.”

NEANDER.

(iv)

P R E F A C E .

THE Author has a few words to say to his readers as to what they are to look for and what they are not to look for in this Memoir.

Some two years ago, his attention was called to the fact that no attempt had yet been made—at least in this country—either to exhibit the great Church-father in his daily outer and inner life, or to estimate the extraordinary influence which his voluminous writings exercised, for so many centuries, upon the Church of Christ. And he was asked to make an effort to supply this want.

After a careful study of the subject he was impressed with the conviction that the first thing to be done was to gather together into a single portraiture the various features of the

MAN, as these were to be found scattered up and down different books and documents, and also were to be detected in his Letters, and especially in his well-known Confessions.

It has been God's uniform method, in effecting any great revival in His Church, to prepare the human instrument by a protracted process of discipline. In the desert of Horeb, the future chief of Israel was trained for forty years. In the lonely nights with his "few sheep," the slayer of Goliath had proved, against "the lion and the bear," the virtue of the Divine panoply. He who enquired, "Lord! what wouldst thou have me to *do*?" was shewn "how great things he must *suffer*." In a later age, the man who gave to Europe a revived theology and a restored Church, *lived out* the heavenly life in the cell at Erfurth and in the chamber at Coburg and in the lowly home at Wittemberg. And, if ever it might be said of a man that the central point of his system of faith had previously been elaborated as the central point of his personal life, that man was St. Augustine.

It is this great fact which gives to the strug-

gles and the victories of his hidden life an interest and a value so transcendant. Like the author of the "Pilgrim's Progress," he first lived the Christian doctrine—then taught it. "The life," he used to say, "must precede the conception; the latter can only come out of the former."

This, too, invested with such authority the teachings of this great Church-father. It was not a poor, shrivelled, lifeless theology which he taught, but "the things which he had seen and heard." And he had heard them, not at the lips of human teachers, but at the feet of the life-giving Saviour. He knew what it was to sit there as a guilty and helpless yet freely forgiven sinner; and so (as Neander justly observes) all that Christ taught him was regarded as infallible truth, which required no other confirmation.

Augustine was not a monk, though he lived in a monkish age. He was a warm-hearted, loving, genial man,—turning his own wheel and the wheels of others with energy,

"Guiding souls to God, and multiplying himself for
heaven."

Hence it comes to pass that the good in all ages have instinctively drawn to him. And hence it is so desirable that a simple photograph of him should be placed within the reach of all. Such is the distinctive and specific aim of this volume; and the Author will feel amply compensated for his labour in preparing it, if it stir in any bosoms—especially among his brethren in the ministry—an intenser longing after holiness and a tenderer yearning over souls.

A recent commentator* on his writings has caught, with his wonted sagacity, Augustine's leading characteristic—an unquenched and unquenchable thirst for the Word. This was his safeguard in his own dark age; and this it is which surrounds with such freshness and such lifelikeness all his words still. If at times his noble mien wear some traces of the *entourage*† of his age, they are the spots in the bright luminary, not the luminary itself. The light in which he lived shone too direct from

* Dean Trench.

† What the Americans, more expressively than elegantly, call "surroundings."

above to leave him the victim of superstitious mummeries such as claim oftentimes the protection of his name. "To the law and to the testimony!" was his unfailing appeal; if any "spoke not according to this Word," it was because there was no life in them."

"O Book! infinite sweetness! let my heart
Suck every letter; and a honey gain,
Precious for any grief in any part,
To clear the breast, to mollify all pain.

"Thou art all health: health thriving till it make
A full eternity.

Heaven lies flat in thee,
Subject to every moulder's bended knee.

"Such are thy secrets; which my life makes good
And comments on thee.
Stars are poor books, and oftentimes do miss;
This book of stars lights to eternal bliss."

Such was Augustine's daily inner life; and he who appreciates aright the lesson of that life, will go, with a deeper relish and on "bended knee," to the Word which was his daily all.

Churches live and die, but the Church is

eternal. Carthage and Hippo and the whole African Church are gone; but Augustine's Lord lives on,—and Augustine, “being dead, yet speaketh.”

LONDON, *Dec.* 15, 1858.

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I.

“Be it a weakness, it deserves some praise,
We love the play-place of our early days;
The scene is touching,—and the heart is stone
That feels not at that sight, and feels at none.”

“Go thy ways, and God bless thee; for it is not possible that the son of these tears should perish.” So spoke, one evening, a holy man in North Africa to a weeping mother who had begged his friendly offices in behalf of her erring son. The answer she “took as if it had sounded from heaven.” The prodigal was the future AUGUSTINE—the weeping mother was Monica.

In the little town of Thagaste, not far from Carthage, there lived in those days a family in middle life, known among the pagan neighbors as “a Christian house.” The soul of the household was “a certain decrepid maid,” who,

having "carried the father when a child, as little ones were wont to be carried at the back of elder girls," and being now "of great age and of excellent conversation," was "well respected by the house." To her, as to a second mother, the daughters of the family were entrusted; and "diligent heed she gave unto her charge," "restraining them earnestly, when needful, with a holy severity," and "teaching them with a grave discretion."

One lesson of this Mentor betrayed her peculiar bent. Except at the regular meals, the girls were "not suffered, though parched with thirst, to drink even water." And this "wholesome advice" was added—"Ye drink water now, because ye have not wine in your power; but, when you come to be married, and be made mistresses of cellars and cupboards, you will scorn water, but the custom of drinking will abide." "By this method of instruction," says Augustine,* "and by the authority she had, she restrained the greediness of childhood, and moulded their very thirst to such an

* The quotations are from the "Confessions" and other writings of Augustine.

excellent moderation, that what they should not, that they would not."

The lesson, however, had not told on all. One of the circle by and by began to "feel creeping upon her a love of wine." The custom of the house was for some member of the family to draw wine out of the hogshead into a flagon, for daily use. For this office Monica was usually selected, "as though a sober maiden;" and, one day, as she was passing the wine from the vessel to the flagon, she "sipped a little with the tip of her lips," for "more her instinctive feelings refused." Habits are formed out of single acts, as a cable out of single threads. That day, in the cellar, the first thread had been woven. "This I did," says Monica, "not out of any desire of drink, but out of the exuberance of youth, whereby it boils over in mirthful freaks. And thus, by adding to that little daily littles, (for, 'whoso despiseth little things shall fall by little and little,') I fell into such a habit as greedily to drink off my little cup, brim-full almost of wine."

But God had a purpose of grace towards

that maiden; and strangely did He work it out.

One day, a domestic, who had been in the habit of going to the cellar with her, "fell to words with her little mistress;" and, in the outburst of passion, she "taunted her with most bitter insult, calling her a wine-bibber." Stung to the quick, Monica "saw the foulness of her fault, instantly condemning and forsaking it." It was, in truth, the finger of God. "Would aught," said Augustine, many years afterwards, "avail against a secret disease, if Thy healing hand, O Lord, watched not over us? Father, mother, and governors absent; Thou present, who createdst, who callest, who also, by those set over us, workest something towards the salvation of our souls;—what didst thou then, O my God? How didst thou cure her? How heal her? Didst thou not, out of another soul, bring forth a hard and a sharp taunt, like a lancet out of thy secret store, and with one touch remove all that foul stuff?"

It was one of the earliest readings of God's "sovereign grace," which had met the eye of the future champion of the faith. "Thou,

Lord," he wrote again, alluding to the scene, "Governor of all in heaven and earth, who turnest to thy purposes the deepest currents and the ruled turbulence of the tide of times, didst, by the very unhealthiness of one soul, heal another; for she in anger sought to vex her young mistress, not to amend her: and this, lest any, *wishing* to reform another, and finding him reformed through words of his, should ascribe it to his own power."

Awakened to a piercing sense of sin, she trembled for the wrath to come. Many a struggle followed; until, at length, one morning, like a shipwrecked mariner, she grasped "the saving plank," and got safe to land. And, her sins now forgiven, she, from the depths of her broken heart, was to pour forth a fragrance more sweet than that of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. "Not her gifts," wrote Augustine, long afterwards, "but Thine in her, would I speak of; for neither did she make nor educate herself. Thou createdst her; and the sceptre of Thy Christ, the discipline of Thine only Son, in a Christian house, a good member of Thy Church educated her in Thy fear."

II.

“ In thy flesh there hath been planted, by the foe, a pricking thorn ;
And, as hour by hour it rankleth, thou art weary, faint, and worn.”

“ IT is often seen,” says Lord Bacon, “ that bad husbands have very good wives.” Monica was to find in her future husband her first heavenly discipline.

In Thegaste, a young freeman might be seen, in those days, foremost in the pagan shows, and not seldom in “ hot conflict with neighbor lads of the town,” but fashioned by nature for warm and generous friendships, and drawing around him many hearts. “ Fervid, as in his affections, so in anger,” Patricius Augustinus was on occasions so “ choleric,” as to be the terror, for the time, of the whole neighborhood. Though a pagan, and leading a pagan’s immoral life, he won the affections of the youth-

ful Monica; and, scarcely had she reached the “marriageable age,” when she entered the “unequal yoke.”

One of our poets has written—

“When thou choosest a wife, think not only of thyself,
But of those God may give thee of her, that they
reproach thee not for their being.”

And again—

“Let her be a child of God, that she bring with her a
blessing to thy house—
A blessing above riches, and leading contentment in
its train.”

Little did poor Patricius think that day of such a blessing as in store for him; but a Hand was leading the future mother, too skilful* to miss its aim.

Monica had sinned, for she had not married “in the Lord;” and many bitter tears it cost her, and “a great fight of afflictions.”

The honeymoon was not well over, when Patricius was at his old ways—night after night a stranger to the home-hearth—a frequenter of revels; and returning again and

* Ps. lxxviii. 72.

again to his youthful wife, only to rage and scold, and even, at times, to lift his hand to her. Monica gave herself to patience and to prayer. "She so endured," says Augustine, "the wronging of her bed, as never to have any quarrel with her husband thereon. For she looked for Thy mercy upon him, that, believing in Thee, he might be made chaste."

And he adds:—"She had learned not to resist an angry husband, not in deed only, but not even in word. Only when he was smooth and tranquil, and in a temper to receive it, she would give an account of her actions, if haply he had overhastily taken offence. In a word, while many matrons, who had milder husbands, would in familiar talk blame their husbands' lives, she would blame their tongues. And, when they, knowing what a choleric husband she endured, marvelled that it had never been heard, nor by any token perceived, that Patricius had beaten his wife, or that there had been any domestic difference between them, even for one day,—confidentially asking the reason, she told them, that, from the time she heard the marriage-writings read to her, she

had accounted them an indenture, binding her not to set herself up against her lord."

Monica had another trial under the home-roof. Patricius had a peevish mother, whose suspicious temperament, finding a ready accomplice in the "whisperings of evil servants," was to the household a daily rankling sore. But, even for her, Monica's "persevering endurance and meekness" were too much; and, at length, the shrew was "so overcome," that she "of her own accord discovered to her son the meddling tongues" which had disturbed the domestic peace, entreating him to correct them. The wound was healed; and they henceforth "lived together with a remarkable sweetness of mutual kindness."

"Love," it is written, "thinketh no evil." Monica possessed that life-sweetening grace. "This great gift also," says Augustine, "Thou bestowedst, O my God, my Mercy, upon that good handmaid of Thine, in whose womb Thou createdst me, that, between any disagreeing and discordant parties, where she was able, she shewed herself such a peacemaker, that, hearing on both sides most bitter things, such as swell-

ing and undigested choler uses to break forth into when the crudities of enmities are breathed out in sour discourses to a present friend against an absent enemy, she never would disclose aught of the one unto the other, but what might tend to their reconciliation. Such was she; Thyself, her most inward Instructor, teaching her in the school of the heart."

And, alluding to these first years of her married life, he adds:—"She served her husband as her lord, and did her diligence to win him unto Thee,—preaching Thee unto him in her conversation by which Thou ornamentedst her, making her reverently amiable and admirable unto him."

At length, he who one day was to be "brought forth by her in heart, that he might be born to light eternal," was "brought forth by her in the flesh, that he might be born into this temporal light." It was on the thirteenth of November, in the year of our Lord 353.

"A babe in a house is a well-spring, a messenger of peace and love."

The infant Aurelius was "taken up by the

comforts of God's compassion ;" and that " mansion of the soul," so narrow and so ruinous, was not to be let alone until it had been repaired and enlarged, and made a fit dwelling for Himself.

III.

“How soft and peaceful were my slumbers then,
Blessed by that lovely thing, a mother’s song !
How welcome was the waking with the day,
How glad the greeting with my playmate throng !
How beautiful I thought the daisy wreath,
With which I then adorn’d my infant brow !
No coronet would be so highly prized,
Or give the wearer half such pleasure now.”

“MAN,” it has been said,

“Doeth one thing at once, nor can he think two
thoughts together ;
But God compasseth all things.”

The same year which gave birth to the infant Corsican who was one day to scourge Europe saw in another far-distant island of the sea the earliest smile of him who was to chain the Gallic eagle to the solitary rock of St. Helena. In like manner, just as the babe of Thegaste appeared, a mother in a lonely cottage in Brit-

ain was already nurturing a spirit which one day was to scourge the Church with one of its deadliest heresies. By and by, we shall meet Pelagius on the scene of conflict. Meanwhile, we turn aside to the nursling-champion whom God was rearing to smite him down.

In his own quaint way, Augustine thus describes his first experience in this vale of tears : "I here received (as I heard, for I remember it not) the comforts of woman's milk. For neither my mother nor my nurses stored their own breasts for me, but Thou didst bestow the food of my infancy through them, according to Thine ordinance, whereby Thou distributest Thy riches through the hidden springs of all things. Thou also gavest me to desire no more than Thou gavest, and to my nurses willingly to give me what Thou gavest them ; for they, with a heaven-taught affection, willingly gave me what they abounded with from Thee. And this, my good from them, was good for them : nor, indeed, from them was it, but through them ; for from Thee, O God, are all good things, and from my God is all my health. This I have since learned,—Thou,

through these Thy gifts, within me and without, proclaiming 'Thyself unto me ; for then I knew but to suck—to repose in what pleased, and to cry at what offended my flesh,—nothing more.”

A babe, it has been said, is

“A resting place for innocence on earth.”

Alas, for the poetic fancy! “I began,” says Augustine, narrating the stern reality, “to smile—first in sleep, then waking ; for so it was told me, of myself. And, little by little, I became conscious where I was, and began to have a wish to express my wishes to those who could content them. And I could not, for the wishes were within me, and they without ; nor could they, by any sense of theirs, enter within my spirit. So I flung about at random limbs and voice, making the few signs I could and such as I could—like (though in truth very little like) what I wished. And when I was not presently obeyed, I was indignant at my elders for not submitting to me ; and I avenged myself on them by tears.”

And he adds:—“Who remindeth me of the

sins of my infancy ! The weakness of infant limbs, not its will, is its innocence. Myself have seen and known even a baby envious ; it could not speak, yet it turned pale and looked bitterly on its foster-brother. Is that innocence, when the fountain of milk is flowing in rich abundance, not to endure one to share it though in extremest need and whose very life depends thereon ? We bear gently with all this ; and yet, though tolerated now, the very same tempers are utterly intolerable, when found in riper years. Alas ! for my sin ! for Thou madest me, but sin in me Thou madest not. What is it to me, though any comprehend not this ? ”

By and by, the “ speechless infant ” rose into the “ speaking boy.” “ This I remember,” says he, “ and have since observed, how I learned to speak. It was not that my elders taught me words in any set method ; but I, longing by cries and broken accents and by various motions of my limbs to express my thoughts that so I might have my will, and yet unable to express all I willed or to whom I willed, did myself, by the understanding which

Thou, my God, gavest me, practise the sounds in my memory. When they named anything and, as they spoke, turned towards it, I saw and remembered that they called what they would point out by the name they uttered. And, that they meant this thing and no other, was plain from the motion of their body—the natural language, as it were, of all nations, expressed by the countenance, by glances of the eye, by gestures of the limbs, and by tones of the voice, indicating the affections of the mind as it pursues, possesses, rejects or shuns. And thus, by constantly hearing words as they occurred in various sentences, I collected gradually for what they stood; and, having broken in my mouth to these signs, I thereby gave utterance to my will. Thus I exchanged with those about me those current signs of our wills, and so launched deeper into the stormy intercourse of human life, yet depending on parental authority and on the beck of elders.”

“The joys of parents,” says Bacon, “are secret; and so are their griefs and fears: they cannot utter the one; and they will not utter the other.” As Monica gazed upon her boy,

she would breathe into the ear of her Lord—the only ear into which she could breathe freely—many a tremulous aspiration. “There is an eternal life,” she would whisper to him, “promised through the humility of the Lord our God stooping to our pride.” And often, often did she pray that the good seed might take root.

One day, in a field, the boy was “attacked with a sudden oppression of the stomach,” and was “like near death.” A strange terror seized him, until, after a few days, he “suddenly recovered.” The terror wore off as suddenly as it had come; but it was the first heavings of that troubled sea which, only after a tossing of his frail bark upon its billows for nearly thirty years, was to hear the voice from heaven, saying, “Peace! be still!”

IV.

“Seldom, when life is mature, and the strength proportioned to the burden,
Will the feeling mind, that can remember, acknowledge to deeper anguish
Than when, as a stranger and a little one, the heart first ached with anxiety
And the sprouting buds of sensibility were bruised by the harshness of a school.”

ONE evening, at the homely fireside at Thegaste, and just as the boy had been put to bed, Patricius was sitting in one of his tenderest moods, talking with Monica of their son's future prospects.

“We must send him to school,” said the father, winding up the conversation in a practical form, though not in the devoutest frame ; “he has parts that will get him on in the world ; he will be sure to make a figure.”

“Yes,” replied Monica, the motherly complacency and the saintly solicitude struggling

for the mastery ; “ I hope he may excel in tongue-science ; but oh ! that it may lead him, in some way, to God ! ”

To school, accordingly, one autumn morning, he hied with a look sorely downcast. If Monica, in her excessive fondness, had hitherto—

“ Stopp’d with indulgence the fountain of his tears,”

that peril, at least, was over now. “ O God, my God,” he wrote, many years afterwards, looking back upon this era of his life, “ what miseries and mockeries did I now experience, when obedience to my teachers was proposed to me as proper in a boy, in order that in this world I might prosper and excel in tongue-science, which should serve to the ‘ praise of men ’ and to deceitful riches.”

“ Custom,” Bacon says, “ is the principal magistrate of man’s life.” In the school, poor Aurelius found to his horror, a “ custom ” which he describes thus :—“ I was to get learning, in which I (poor wretch) knew not what use there was ; and yet, if idle in learning, I was *beaten*. For, this was judged right by our

forefathers; and many, passing the same course before us, framed for us weary paths through which we wens fain to pass, multiplying toil and grief upon the sons of Adam." He "loved not study," and "hated to be forced to it;" yet he "was forced."

And the worst of all was, "his elders, yea, his very parents, who yet wished him no ill," would "mock his stripes, his then great and grievous ill." Even Monica—such was the "tyrant-power of custom"—had no relentings at the "wrenching" of her boy's "young heart's fibres."

One heart, the boy had heard, was not steeled. "Lord," says he, "we found that men called upon Thee; and we learned from them to think of Thee (according to our powers) as of some great One who, though hidden from our senses, couldst hear and help us. And so I began to pray to Thee, my aid and refuge,—and broke again the fetters of my tongue to call on Thee, praying Thee—though small, yet with no small earnestness—that I might not be beaten at school." His prayer, however, was "not heard;" and, in after-years,

he blessed the Lord that He “did not thereby give him over to folly.”

The urchin’s “sole delight” was “play.”

“Unbutton’d, glowing hot,”

His joy . . . “to kneel and draw

The chalky ring, and knuckle down at taw,

To pitch the ball into the rounded hat,

Or drive it devious with a dextrous pat.”

And for this—poor boy! he was “punished by those who yet themselves were doing the like.” But “elder folks’ idleness,” says he, “is called ‘business’; that of boys being really the same, is punished by those elders. He who beat me was, if worsted in some trifling discussion with his fellow-tutor, more embittered and jealous than I when beaten at ball by a play-fellow.”

And another apology he found for his boyish idleness:—“I loved the pride of victory in my contests, and to have my ears tickled with lying fables, that they might itch the more,—the same curiosity flashing from my eyes, more and more, for the shows and games of my elders. Yet those who give these shows,” he proceeds, “are in such esteem, that almost all

wish the same for their children, and yet are very willing that they should be beaten if those very games detain them from the studies whereby they would have them attain to be givers of them." And he adds:—"Look with pity, Lord, on these things."

Poor wight! how his soul was haunted by that terrific spectre of the birch!

"How sorrow sat upon his pillow, and terror woke him up betimes!"

"Is there, Lord," we find him exclaiming, long afterwards, as the unquieted ghost rose up before him in all its old grimness, "any of soul so great, and cleaving to Thee with so intense affection, that he can think as lightly of the racks and boots and other torments, against which, throughout all lands, men call on Thee with extreme dread, and can smile at those by whom they are feared most bitterly, as our parents smiled at the torments which we suffered in boyhood from our masters? For we feared not our torments the less; nor prayed we less to Thee, to escape them."

Bitterly, however, in after-days, did he la-

ment this "sowing of wild oats." "I sinned herein," he writes, "O Lord God, the Creator and Disposer of all things in nature, I sinned in transgressing the commands of my parents and of those my masters. For, what they, with whatever motive, would have me learn, I might afterward have put to good use. I sinned in writing or reading or studying less than was exacted of me. For I wanted not, O Lord, memory or capacity, whereof Thy will gave enough for my age."

V.

“How weak the barrier of mere nature proves,
Opposed against the pleasure nature loves !
While self-betray'd, and wilfully undone,
She longs to yield, no sooner woo'd than won.”

“OH! that I might repose on Thee!” Augustine wrote, one day. “Oh! that Thou wouldst enter into my heart, and inebriate it, that I might forget my ills, and embrace Thee, my sole good!” But a dark, dark night was yet to be traversed, before he could even breathe this longing.

We enter the school again. There he is,—still a prisoner on that bench! How it is

“Mangled, hack'd, and hew'd, not yet destroy'd.”

And how he “hates the Greek!” And—the “reading, writing, and arithmetic,” he “thinks as great a penalty as any Greek.” The “Lat-

in " he "loved;" not the elements, however, but "what the so-called" grammarians "taught" him. He "learned the wanderings of one Æneas, forgetful of his own;" and he "wept for dead Dido, because she killed herself for love,—the while, with dry eyes, enduring his miserable self-dying among these things, far from Him who was his life." And thus his "curious spirit" was

"Cramm'd with unwholesome garbage,
While starving for the mother's milk the breasts of nature
yield;
And high-color'd fables of depravity lured with their classic
varnish,
While truth was holding out in vain her mirror much des-
pised."

Foster describes "glory" as "vanity turned into a god,"—having this one advantage over every other, that it makes man *himself* the idol. "This," says he, "is the adored object for which so many souls are feverishly panting! This is what calls out the energy of all the faculties,—what poets and orators, and the world's other oracles, have been extolling through all ages! This is what absorbs the

devotion due to God! this is what myriads have been willing to lose their souls to obtain!" In letters of living fire that phantasm was now engraven on the youthful learner's heart.

One day "a task was set upon him—upon terms of praise, or of shame and stripes"—to "speak the words of Juno (words, he had heard, she never uttered) as she raged and mourned that she could not

'This Trojan prince from Latium turn.' "

The boy was roused to an unwonted effort; and as he was pronounced the victor, the walls rang again. It was

"The fire-damp gathering in the mine,
The soul swelling with poisonous air, which a spark of temptation might explode."

"What is it to me," he wrote long afterwards, "O my true life, my God, that my declamation was applauded above so many of my own age and class? is not all this smoke and wind? And was there nothing else whereon to exercise my wit and tongue? Thy praises, Lord, Thy praises might have stayed the yet

tender shoot of my heart by the prop of Thy Scriptures. I read of Jove the thunderer and the adulterer—a divine nature ascribed to wicked men, that crimes might be no longer crimes, and that those who committed them might seem to imitate not abandoned men but the celestial gods. And, O my God, all this unhappily I learned willingly, with great delight, and, for this was pronounced a hopeful boy.”

Destined by his parents to be a “teacher of oratory”—a profession of great dignity and influence in those days,—he now removed to the “neighbour city” of Madaura. He was in his fifteenth year; and most affecting is the picture which he gives of his “foulness and corruption.” “With innumerable lies he would deceive his tutors, his masters, his parents,” from “eagerness to see vain shows and from restlessness to imitate them.” So “enslaved” was he, too, by “greediness,” or “that he might have to give to boys who sold him their play,” that he would “commit thefts from his parents’ cellar and table.” Fierce passions also “boiled” within him, “sinking him in a gulf of flagi-

tiousness." And conscience had ceased to utter her protests. "I was grown deaf," says he, "by the clanking of the chain of my mortality, the punishment of the pride of my soul; and I strayed farther from Thee, and Thou lettedst me alone, and I was tossed about, and wasted and dissipated, and I boiled over in my fornications, and Thou heldest Thy peace, O Thou my tardy joy! Thou then heldest Thy peace; and I wandered further and further from Thee, into more and more fruitless seed-plots of sorrows, with a proud dejectedness and a restless weariness!"

Meanwhile, Patricius Augustine was still a pagan; but Monica prayed on. Another year was to finish his course on earth; but, before passing into eternity, he was to pass from death to life. Monica could wait; and long she had waited: but, like her prototype of "the borders of Tyre and Sidon," she was one who could take no denial. "Through the witness of the fruits of a holy conversation," he at last was drawn after Him whom she loved so well. "Towards the very end of his earthly life," says Aurelius, "did she gain him unto Thee;

nor had she to complain of that in him, as a believer, which, before he was a believer, she had borne from him."

The student was at home again, passing "a season of idleness, occasioned by the narrowness of his parents' fortunes." It was his sixteenth year; and, though his God was "mercifully rigorous" to him, besprinkling with most bitter alloy all his unlawful pleasures, "that he might seek pleasure without alloy"—he "foamed" more than ever, "like a troubled sea, following the rushing of his own tide—forsaking God, and exceeding all God's limits."

Monica wept and trembled. Year by year—almost month by month—her counsels and her entreaties seemed to tell less feebly on her boy. Like some coral island,

"Fresh from the floor of the Atlantic,
Dinted by every ripple, and a soft wave smoothing its
surface,
But soon its substance hardening in the winds and
tropic sun,
And weakly the foaming billows breaking against its
adamantine wall,"—

Aurelius seemed hardening into an "obduracy of vileness" almost beyond the reach of hope. "Behold," says he, "with what companions I walked the streets of Babylon, and wallowed in the mire thereof, as if in a bed of spices and precious ointments! And, that I might cleave the faster to its very centre, the invisible enemy trod me down, and seduced me, for I was easy to be seduced." Monica would warn him "in private, and with great anxiety," against "those crooked ways in which they walk who turn their back to God and not the face." But "the briers of unclean desires grew only more rank over his head." His mother's words were "womanish advices," which he should "blush to obey."

It was "God himself speaking to him by her," though he "knew it not."

But even then he was not let quite alone. "Dare I say," he writes, "that Thou heldest Thy peace, O my God, while I wandered further from Thee? Didst Thou then indeed hold Thy peace to me? And whose but Thine were those words which by my mother, Thy faithful one, Thou sangest in my ears—nothing

whereof sank into my heart so as to do it? I thought Thou wert silent, and that it was she who spake; by whom Thou wert not silent unto me, but in her was despised by me her son, 'the son of Thy hand-maid, Thy servant.' I sank away from Thee, and I wandered, O my God, too much astray from Thee, my stay; and I became a barren land."

VI.

“Man, on the dubious waves of error tossed,
His ship half foundered, and his compass lost,
Sees, far as human optics may command,
A sleeping fog, and fancies it dry land.”

It was a beautiful summer evening, and the sun was setting with a calm lustre peculiar to a Mediterranean sky, when, on the Corso of Carthage, might be seen a gay crowd, flitting along

“Like some fairy skiff, plying on the sea of life.”

An hour or two passed; and the capacious theatre was re-echoing to the huzzas of a countless multitude, mad with impure excitement and with “the hell of lustfulness.” The night orgies over, and the next sun scarce risen, there were pacing the halls of the rhetoricians’ school certain of the most prominent idlers of the Corso and of the Circus, “learning

eloquence," to "excel in the courts of litigation," and "desiring to be eminent, out of a damnable and vain-glorious end—a joy in human vanity." One of these was Aurelius, now entering his seventeenth year, and a student in his last term.*

The fashion in the schools was to set the youths

"A-tilting with their fellows,"

"confounding" true philosophy "in a labyrinth of words." In this logomachy the student of Thégaste was soon the acknowledged "chief,"—whereat he "joyed proudly" and "swelled with arrogancy."

But he had not been in Carthage many weeks, when "there sang all around him in his ears a cauldron of unholy loves." He "loved not yet;" but, "in love with loving," he "sought what he might love." "Safety" he hated, and "a way without snares." His "soul, sickly and full of sores," longed to be

* "By his resolution," says Augustine, "rather than by his means, my father furnished me with all necessities for going to Carthage for my studies' sake."

“scraped by the touch of the objects of sense;” and so, ere long, “defiling the spring of friendship with the filth of concupiscence,” he “fell headlong into the love in which he desired to be ensnared.” Another of his “fleshly delights” was “stage-plays.” “Full of images of his miseries and of fuel to his fire,” they yet moved so intensely his sorrow, that “this very sorrow was his pleasure;” and, night after night, he “stayed intent, and wept for joy.” Himself “miserable,” he “loved to grieve, and sought out what to grieve at,”—that “acting best pleasing him, and attracting him the most vehemently, which drew from him most tears.”

It was whilst thus “wandering with a stiff neck,” and “loving a vagrant liberty,” that that “faithful mercy,” which had “hovered over him from afar,” sped from its quiver the first awakening arrow. One day, “in the ordinary course of study,” he “fell upon a certain book of Cicero, containing an exhortation to philosophy.” As yet, “apostolic scripture was not known” to him; but “Hortensius” discoursed so wisely concerning the vanity of

the prevailing fashion of the schools, that he was "strongly roused and kindled and inflamed to love and seek and obtain and hold and embrace, not this or that sect, but wisdom itself, whatever it might be." Every "vain hope" at once became worthless to him; and he "longed with an incredibly burning desire for an immortality of wisdom."

The book "altered his whole affections, making him other purposes and desires." "Not to sharpen my tongue," says he, "did I employ that book; nor did it infuse into me its style, but its matter.

But one thing "checked him thus enkindled." "The name of CHRIST," he thought within himself, one day, "is not in it." For, though up to that hour the precious name had had no place as a power in his conscience or in his heart, it had been "so drunk in with his mother's milk," and so "deeply treasured," that "whatever was without it, though never so learned, polished, or true, took not entire hold of him." But "now," says he, "I began to arise that I might return to Thee. How did I burn, my God, how did I burn to remount

from earthly things to Thee! nor knew I what Thou wouldst do with me. For with Thee is wisdom."

The "poor freeman of Thagaste" was seized that autumn with a sudden illness; and Aurelius hastened home. He arrived to find his worst fears realized; for Patricius had "fallen asleep," and Monica was a widow. The stroke came at a moment not inopportune; and, under it, Monica demeaned herself so calmly, and found in the Word a balm so solacing, that the student returned to Carthage, "resolved to bend his mind to the Holy Scriptures, that he might see what they were."

But as yet he went to the Scriptures only to "see in them a certain meanness, unworthy to be compared with the stateliness of Tully;" and his "swelling pride" shrank from their lowliness, nor could his "sharp wit pierce the interior thereof." The Bible, and its simple message of grace, is "a thing not understood by the proud, but laid open to children"—lowly in access—in its recesses lofty, and veiled with mysteries;" and *he* was "not such as enter it, or to stoop his neck to follow its

steps." "Its mysteries are such," says he, "as grow up in a little one ; but I disdained to be a little one,—being swollen with pride, and taking myself to be a great one."

Aurelius had come within sight of the haven ; but the time of entrance and of rest was not yet.

VII.

“Like quicksilver, the rhetoric they display,
Shines as it runs, but, grasp'd at, slips away.”

A CENTURY before, from a cave in Turkistan, there had issued a strange pretender, claiming to have been miraculously born of a virgin, and to have received from heaven, during his mysterious retirement, certain special revelations. Buddha, Zoroäster, the Christ, had been, each in their turn, the manifested God; and MANI himself was no other than the promised “Paraclete,” whose mission was to restore the Church by “leading into all truth,” by solving all problems, by initiating into all mysteries all who yearned after knowledge.

Spirit and matter (said this deceiver, fashioning with his plastic hand into one uncouth medley the Christian doctrine and the old religions of Asia,) are essentially antagonistic;

their union gradually benumbing "spirit" into unconsciousness. To the ordinary human incarnations of spirit, the only method of release is a process of self-crucifying purification, followed by an ultimate absorption into the primal Spirit. Buddha, Zoroaster, the Christ, and Mani, rising superior to the constraining bonds of matter, have wrought out redemption for the souls which otherwise were hopelessly imprisoned. For sin, indeed, and for atonement, Manicheism found no place, evil being a mere accident resulting from the creature's temporary bondage to matter; but it spoke of a Christ "crucified in every soul,"—a suffering "son of man" hanging upon every tree,—the entire world as one vast cross, on which spirit was suffering crucifixion at the hands of implacable matter.

The student of Carthage was now thrown among these "talkers." Inwardly, in the marrow of his soul, panting after truth and after Him who is the truth, he had "served up" to him these "glittering phantasies; and, because he "thought them to be God," he "fed thereon." "I fell," says he, "among men proudly doting,

exceeding carnal and prating; in whose mouths were the snares of the devil, limed with the mixture of the syllables of Thy name, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete our Comforter. These names departed not out of their mouth; but so far forth as the sound only and the noise of the tongue, for the heart was void of truth. Yet they cried out, 'Truth! Truth!' and spake much thereof to me; but it 'was not in them.'"

Poor Aurelius! how he was buffeted and tossed—the sport of every charlatan, the slave of every passion!

"Lime begg'd of old, they say,
A neighbor spring to cool his inward heat,
Which, by the spring's access, grew much more great."

Such was Augustine. "Thou," says he, "wast not these emptinesses; nor was I nourished by them, but exhausted rather. Food in sleep looks very like our food awake; yet are not those asleep nourished by it, for they are asleep." And he adds:—"How much better are the fables of poets and grammarians than these snares! For, 'Medea flying,' though I

did sing, I believed not; but these things I did believe. Woe, woe! by what steps was I brought down to 'the depths of hell!' toiling and turmoiling through want of truth!"

But one heart was not daunted,—“hoping against hope.”

“By faith valiant for her son.”

Monica “saw herself standing,” one night, “on a certain wooden rule,” when “a shining one came towards her cheerful and smiling,” herself “grieving and overwhelmed with grief.” “Why weepest thou?” tenderly inquired the mysterious visitor. “Oh! my Aurelius!” sobbed the mother; “my heart breaks for him.” “Look!” said the stranger; and, glancing in the direction to which he pointed, she saw her son “standing by her in the same rule.” “Be content and of good courage!” he added, “where thou art, there he is also.” And Monica awoke.

The mother, overjoyed, hastened to her son, and narrated the dream. “Ah!” said Aurelius, “it means rather that you should not despair of being one day what I am.” “No,”

replied Monica promptly; "it was not told me that 'where he, there thou also,' but 'where thou, there he also.'" "I confess to Thee, O Lord," Augustine wrote, long afterwards, recalling the incident, "that, to the best of my remembrance (and I have oft spoken of this), Thy answer through my waking mother—that she was not perplexed by the plausibility of my false interpretation, and so quickly saw what was to be seen, and which I certainly had not perceived before she spake—even then moved me more than the dream itself, by which a joy to the holy woman, to be fulfilled so long after, was, for the consolation of her present anguish, so long before fore-signified." And, at a later period, he added:—"Whence was it but that Thine ears were towards her heart, O Thou Good Omnipotent, who so ever carest for every one of us as if Thou caredst for him only, and so for all as if they were but one?"

Another day, Monica "knocked at the door of a certain bishop, brought up in Thy Church, and well studied in Thy books." Known and honoured as one of the Lord's true shepherds

who yearned over the lost and the wandering, —Monica had come to him to engage his kind offices on behalf of her son. “Do speak to him,” she said, as she stood in his humble apartment, the tears “streaming down her care-worn cheek:” “unteach him ill things, and teach him good things; for he is led captive by the devil at his will.” “No,” replied the bishop, kindly; “let him alone a while; he is not teachable yet, he is puffed up with vain notions.” “But what,” rejoined Monica, “If he be taken away in his sins?” “We must wait,” said the bishop gravely; “my own mother was once seduced by the same impiety, and handed me over to these people. I read all their books, and frequently copied out almost all of them. But, without any argument or proof from any one, I was delivered from that snare of the devil. Therefore wait, and pray to God for him.” “But will you not see him?” she again asked, with many tears. “Wait, I say, wait,” was the reply; “wait patiently: the son of these tears cannot perish.”

For nine more years was Aurelius to “wallow

in the mire of that deep pit, and in the darkness of falsehood,—often assaying to rise, but dashed down the more grievously.’ And, all that time, did the “chaste, godly, and sober widow—now more cheered with hope, yet no whit relaxing in her weeping and mourning”—continue, “at all hours of her devotions,” to bewail his case before the Lord. “Her prayers,” says he, “entered into Thy presence; and yet Thou sufferedst me to be involved and re-involved in that darkness.”

In those years—“from his nineteenth to his eight-and-twentieth,”—first in his native town, and latterly in Carthage, he “taught rhetoric.” “Overcome by cupidity,” says he, “I made sale of a loquacity to overcome by. Choosing honest scholars (as they were accounted), I, without artifice, taught them artifices, to be practised, not against the life of the guiltless, though sometimes for the life of the guilty.”

His ruling passion was, to “hunt after the emptiness of popular praise, down even to theatrical applauses, and poetic prizes, and strifes for grassy garlands, and the follies of shows.” One day, he had “settled to enter

the lists for a theatrical prize," when a wizzard asked him "what he **would** give him to win?" The wizzard was to "sacrifice some living creatures to the devils, and, by these honours, to invite them to favour him." The "foul mysteries" he did not consent to,—but "not out of love to God." Another of his snares was "a seduced and seducing lust." "In those years," says he, "I had one, not in that which is called lawful marriage, but whom I had found out in a wayward passion, void of understanding:—

Cowper writes:—

"Faults in the life breed errors in the brain,
And these reciprocally those again;
The mind and conduct mutually imprint
And stamp their image in each other's mint;
Each, sire and dam of an infernal race,
Begetting and conceiving all that's base."

Augustine in those years might have sat for that picture. "These things," he wrote afterwards, looking back upon the humiliating scene, "did I follow and practise with my friends, deceived by me and with me. O my God, I would still confess to Thee mine own shame in Thy praise."

VIII.

“My God! what is a heart?”

“WHERE?” it has been asked, concerning him whose “bark is cut from the anchorage of God,”

“Where is the imposture so gross, that shall not entrap his curiosity?

What superstition so abject, that it doth not blanch his cheek?”

A new imposture now led Aurelius captive. “Nativity-casters”—because they “seemed to use no sacrifice, nor to pray to any spirit for their divinations”—he “consulted without scruple.” Instead of

“Counting down from God’s goodwill, and melting every riddle into Him,”

these star-gazers “said, ‘The cause of thy sin

is determined in heaven,' and, 'This did Venus, or Saturn, or Mars,'—that man, forsooth, flesh and blood, and proud corruption, might be blameless, whilst the Creator and Ordainer of heaven and of the stars was to bear the blame." The folly was pleasing to the rhetorician's unbroken heart; and he clung to it with "a mad desire."

One afternoon, some months before, in the crowded Circus, the walls had rung to the echo, as a graceful youth came forward, at the close, to receive from the hand of the Roman proconsul the "agonistic garland." From that hour the magistrate and the prizeman had been sworn friends. "A wise man; very skilful in physic, and renowned therein; simple in his speech, but vivid, lively and earnest,"—he had won the heart of Aurelius, who "hung assiduously and fixedly" on his lips. "Gathering by his discourse" that he was "given to the books of the nativity-casters," the old man "kindly and fatherly advised him to cast them away, and not to fruitlessly bestow upon these vanities a care and diligence necessary for useful things."

But Aurelius “sighed after the fictions;” and the counsel grated upon his ear. “I studied the art,” said the proconsul, an evening or two afterwards, “intending to make it my profession; and, as I understood Hippocrates, I could soon have understood such a study as this: but I gave it over, and took to physic, because I found it utterly false.” “How, then, replied Augustine, impatiently, “can many true things be foretold by it? “Why, chance,” said his friend, “brings this about. If you open the pages of a poet who sings of something wholly different, a verse will oftentimes fall out wondrously agreeable to the present business: why, then, out of the soul of man, unconscious of what takes place within it, may there not be given by hap, not by art, an answer corresponding to the business and actions of the demander?” “But,” replied Augustine, “I have as yet found no certain proof that what is truly foretold of these people was the result of hap-hazard, not of the art of stargazers.” “Thou hast rhetoric to maintain thyself by,” urged the magistrate, “so that thou followest this of free choice, not of necessity :

the more, then, oughtest thou to give me credit herein, who laboured to acquire it so perfectly as to get my living by it alone."

Augustine was not moved. "Thus much," he writes, in his *Confessions*, referring to this stage of his wanderings, "either from or through him, Thou conveyedst to me, and tracedst in my memory, what I might thereafter examine for myself. But, at that time, neither he, nor my dearest Nebridius—a youth singularly good, and of a holy fear, who derided the whole body of divination—could persuade me to cast it aside,—the authority of the authors swaying me yet more." It was but another instance of Cowper's apophthegm—

'Hear the just law—the judgment of the skies—
He that hates truth shall be the dupe of lies ;
And he that will be cheated to the last,
Delusions strong as hell shall bind him fast."

The delusions were not yet over. One day, at Carthage, "a book of Aristotle, which they called the *Ten Predicaments*," fell into his hands ; and he "read and understood it unaided." A great celebrity of the town, "accounted learned," used to "mouth the name

of Aristotle with cheeks bursting with pride ;” and young Aurelius would hang “ on the very name,” as on “ something great and divine.” The book appeared to him to “ speak very clearly of substances, such as ‘ man,’ and of their qualities, as the figure of a man, of what sort it is ; and stature, how many feet high ; and his relationship, whose brother he is ; or where placed ; or when born ; or whether he stands or sits, or be shod or armed, or does or suffers anything ; and all the innumerable things which may be ranged under these Nine Predicaments of which the above are specimens, or under that chief Predicament of Substance.” His vanity, too, was flattered, when, “ on conferring with others who said that they scarcely understood the book with the help of very able tutors not only orally explaining it but drawing many things in sand,” he found they “ could tell no more of it than he had learned reading it by himself.”

But he tasted

“ The sweet Circean cup,”

only to find it once more "a blinding spell." "What," says he, "did all this further me, seeing it even hindered me? when imagining that whatever is, was comprehended under those Ten Predicaments, I essayed in such wise to understand, O my God, Thy wonderful and unchangeable Unity also, as if Thou also hadst been subjected to Thine own greatness and beauty. But it was falsehood which of Thee I conceived, not truth; fictions of my misery, not the realities of Thy blessedness."

A new experiment was tried. All the books he could procure "on the so-called liberal arts," he greedily devoured, "delighting in whatever had been written of them," and, "by himself, without much difficulty or any instructor, understanding them." But this, too, proved only another gilded cheat. "I knew not," says he, "whence came all which therein was true and certain; for I had my back to the light, and my face to the things enlightened,—whence my face, with which I discerned the things enlightened, itself was not enlightened." And, worse than all, he continued "the vile slave of

vile affections,”—“seduced and seducing, deceived and deceiving, in divers lusts—openly, by sciences which they call liberal—secretly, with a false-named religion—here proud, there superstitious, everywhere vain.”

IX.

“Come, I will shew thee a friend—one worthy of thy trust :
Thine heart shall not weary of him.”

“FRIENDSHIP,” it has been said, “is a marvel among men.” Such a friendship Augustine’s yearning heart clasped to itself in these years.

Of his own age, this friend “had grown up as a child with him”—had been his schoolfellow and playfellow; and both had reached, together, “the opening flower of youth.” “Ripened,” too, “by the warmth of kindred studies,” the attachment grew so “sweet,” that “his soul could not be without him.” Daily they would “talk and jest together”—“do kind offices by turns”—“read together honied books,”—“play the fool or be earnest together”—“dissent at times without discontent, as a man might with his own self,”—“seasoning, even with the seldomness of these dissentings, their more frequent meetings.”

“They would commune of hopes and aspirations, the fervent breathings of the heart ;
They would speak with pleasant interchange the treasured secrets of affection ;
They would listen to the voice of complaint, and whisper the language of comfort ;
And, as in a double solitude, would think in each other’s hearing.”

“These and the like expressions,” says Augustine, “proceeding, out of hearts which love and are loved again, by the countenance, the tongue, the eyes, and a thousand pleasing gestures, were so much fuel to melt our souls together, and out of two to make but one.”

Alas! in another thing, also, the kindred spirits were “but one.” “From the true faith,” Augustine writes, “(which he, as a youth, had not soundly and thoroughly imbibed), I warped him to these superstitions and pernicious fables, for which my mother bewailed me. With me he now erred in mind.”

Suddenly seized with “a sore fever,” his friend lay, one night, “senseless, in a death-sweat.” After a few days, he was unexpectedly raised up; and scarcely was he “able to speak,” when he found Aurelius (who “had never left

him," for they "hung but too much upon each other") at his bedside, "jesting with him," and merry-hearted, "fancying his soul still loved the emptinesses which before had charmed them." But, instead of the old smile, the invalid "so shrank from him as from an enemy;" and, "with a wonderful and sudden freedom," he "bade him, as he would continue his friend, to forbear such language to him." "All astonished and amazed," Augustine "suppressed his emotions," till his friend should be grown well, and his health be strong enough for him to deal with him. But the young Thegastian had found the "pearl of great price." A few days later, in Aurelius' absence, he was "attacked again by the fever," and "so departed."

"These are thy wonders, Lord of power!
Killing, and quick'ning; bringing down to hell,
And up to heav'n, in an hour."

Poor Augustine! how he wept! "Sweet to him above all sweetness of that his life," his "lost one" seemed to have taken with him into yonder cold tomb his other self. "At this

grief," says he, "my heart was utterly darkened; and whatever I beheld was death. Whatever I had shared with him, was now—wanting him—become a distracting torture. Mine eyes sought him everywhere, but he was not granted them; and I hated all places, for that they had not him; nor could they now tell me, 'He is coming,' as when he was alive, and absent. I neither hoped he should return to life, nor did I desire this with my tears; but I wept only and grieved, for I was miserable, and had lost my joy."

It was a stunning stroke to him. Weeping as if he would weep out his eyes, he seemed to exclaim—

"Oh! who will give me tears? Come, all ye springs,
Dwell in my head and eyes. Come clouds and rain!
I've need of all the watery things
That Nature hath produced. Let ev'ry vein
Suck up a river, to supply mine eyes,
My weary, weeping eyes; too dry for me,
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,
To bear them out, and with my state agree."

His torn heart found only "tears sweet;" for they "succeeded his friend in the dearest of

his affections." "I bore about," says he, "a shattered and bleeding soul, impatient of being borne by me; yet, where to repose it, I found not. Not in calm groves, not in games and music, nor in fragrant spots, nor in curious banquetings, nor in the pleasures of the bed and of the couch; nor, finally, in books of poesy—found it repose. All things looked ghastly, yea, the very light; whatever was not what he was, was revolting and hateful, except groaning and tears. For in these alone found I a little refreshment. But; when my soul was withdrawn from them, a huge load of misery weighed me down. I wondered," he adds, "that others, subject to death, did live,—since he, whom I loved as if he should never die, was dead. And I wondered yet more, that myself, who was to him a second self, could live, he being dead. Well said one of his friends, 'Thou half of my soul!' for I felt that my soul and his soul were 'one soul in two bodies;' and therefore was my life a horror to me, because I would not live halved."

In these hours of deep agony, he would whisper to his disquieted spirit, "Trust in

God!" But "she obeyed him not;" and "very rightly,"—for "that most dear friend whom she had lost, was, being man, both truer and better than that phantasm she was bid to trust in."

As yet, God was to him but a phantom,—
"his error was, his God." "To Thee, O Lord," says he, "my burdened soul ought to have been raised, for Thee to lighten: I knew it; but I neither could nor would; the more, since, when I thought of Thee, Thou wert not to me any solid or substantial thing; for Thou wert not Thyself, but a mere 'brightness.' If I offered to discharge my load thereon, that it might rest,—it glided through the void, and came rushing down again upon me; and I had remained to myself a hapless spot, where I could neither be, nor be from thence. For, whither should my heart flee from my heart? whither should I flee from myself? whither not follow myself?"

And, his God a phantom, his bereaved heart naturally went, for "restoration and refreshment," only to "the solaces of other friends." "Blessed," says he, "who so loveth Thee, and

his friend in Thee; for he alone loses none dear to him, to whom all are dear in Him who cannot be lost." A bitter discipline was yet to teach him, that, "whithersoever the soul of man turns itself, unless towards its God, it is riveted upon sorrows, yea, though it is riveted upon things beautiful."

X.

“By what unseen and unsuspected arts
The serpent Error twines round human hearts !
Not all whose eloquence the fancy fills,
Musical as the chime of tinkling rills,
Weak to perform, though mighty to pretend,
Can trace his mazy windings to their end.”

“PRIDE,” says one, “is coiled as a poisonous worm about the foundations of the soul;” and its “death” is, to “wait as an almsman upon God.” Augustine was now in his twenty seventh year; and, though “longing to stand and hearken to God,” he “could not, for the voices of his own errors.” “Through the weight of my pride,” says he, “I was sinking into the lowest pit.”

For a year or two back, he had been “meditating on ‘the fair and the fit.’” “Do we love,” he would say to his friends, “anything but the beautiful? What, then, is the beauti-

ful? and what is beauty? What is it that attracts and wins us to the things we love?" At length "corporeal fictions," "buzzing in the ears of his heart," came forth in "two or three books," which he dedicated to "Hierius, an orator of Rome."

This Roman he "knew not by face," but "loved for the fame of his learning, and for some words of his, which he had heard, and which pleased him." By birth a Syrian, Hierius had risen, after being "instructed in Grecian eloquence," into "a wonderful Latin orator, and one most learned in things pertaining unto philosophy." Aurelius, wishing to be "himself such," loved him "for the love of the orator's commendations, rather than for the things for which he was commended." "It was to me a great matter," says he, "that my discourse and labours should be known to that man; which should he approve, I were the more kindled; but, if he disapproved, my empty heart, void of Thy solidity, had been wounded. For so did I then lean upon the judgment of men, not upon Thine, O my God, in whom no man is deceived."

All this time, he knew not that the soul must be "enlightened by another light" than its own, if it would be "partaker of truth." God must light its candle; but Aurelius was his own candle. "What prouder," says he, "than for me, with a strange madness, to maintain myself to be by nature that which Thou art? And I was wont, pratingly and foolishly, to ask Thy faithful little ones—'Why, then, doth the soul err, which God created?' But I would not be asked, 'Why, then, doth God err?' And I maintained, that Thy unchangeable substance did err upon constraint, rather than confess that my changeable substance had gone astray voluntarily; and now, in punishment, I lay in error."

The result he gives, thus:—"I pressed towards Thee, and was thrust from Thee, that I might taste of death; for Thou 'resistest the proud.'" And, again:—"I was repelled by Thee; and Thou resistedst my vain stiffneckedness."

And, again:—"What did this further me, imagining that Thou, O Lord God, the Truth, wert a vast and bright body, and I a fragment

of that body? Perverseness too great! But such was I. Nor do I blush, O my God, to 'confess to Thee Thy mercies towards me,' and to call upon Thee,—I who blushed not then to profess to men my blasphemies, and to bark against Thee. What profited me then my nimble wit in those sciences and in all those most knotty volumes, unravelled by me without aid from human instruction,—seeing I erred so foully, and with such sacrilegious shamefulness, in the doctrine of piety? Or, what hindrance was a far lower wit to Thy little ones—since they departed not far from Thee, that in the nest of Thy Church they might securely be fledged, and might nourish the wings of charity by the food of a sound faith?"

Aurelius was in his nine-and-twentieth year, when there arrived, one day, at Carthage, "a certain bishop of the Manichees, Faustus by name, a great snare of the devil." Fame had "before bespoken him most knowing in all valuable learning, and exquisitely skilled in the liberal sciences." And scarcely had he reached the city, when "many were entangled

by him through the lure of his smooth language." Augustine, regarding less "the service of oratory" than "the science which this Faustus set before him to feed upon," found, in "those long fables of the Manichees," conclusions respecting "the solstices, the equinoxes, the eclipses of the greater lights," and such matters—"quite contrary" to what had been established "by calculations and by his own sight."

Even a philosophy which could have accurately "measured the heavens, and numbered the stars, and poised the elements," would have failed to satisfy a heart which "God had made for Himself," and which "must be restless until it reposed in Him." "Doth, then," he writes, "O Lord God of Truth, whoso knoweth these things, therefore please Thee? Surely, unhappy is he who knoweth all these, and knoweth not Thee; but happy whoso knoweth Thee, though he know not these. And whoso knoweth both Thee and them, is not the happier for them, but for Thee only,—if, knowing Thee, he 'glorifies Thee as God, and is thankful, and becomes not vain in his imaginations.'

For, as he is better off who knows how to possess a tree, and returns thanks to Thee for the use thereof, although he know not how many cubits high it is, or how wide it spreads, than he that can measure it, and count all its boughs, and neither owns it, nor knows or loves its Creator;—so, a believer, whose is all this world of wealth, and who, ‘having nothing, yet possesseth all things,’ by cleaving unto Thee whom all things serve, though he know not even the circles of the Great Bear, yet is it folly to doubt but he is in a better state than one who by curious skill can measure the starry heavens, and track the courses of the planets, yet neglecteth Thee.”

But could Manichæus—who, “*not knowing these things*, most impudently dared to teach them”—“have any knowledge of piety?” “Going about to persuade men, that ‘the Holy Ghost, the Comforter and Enricher of God’s faithful ones, was with plenary authority personally within him;’” and yet “convicted,” by “those who had truly learned them,” of “teaching falsely of the heaven and the stars, and of the motions of the sun and moon (al-

though these things pertained not to the doctrine of religion);”—was he not plainly guilty of “sacrilegious presumption, seeing he delivered things, which not only he knew not but which were falsified, with so mad a vanity of pride that he sought to ascribe them to himself as to a divine person?”

It was now nine years since Augustine, “with unsettled mind,” had become a Manichee. Year by year, new difficulties had agitated him; and “the rest of the sect,” whom “by chance he had lighted upon,” had, when “unable to solve his objections about these things,” still “held out to him the coming of this Faustus, by conference with whom these, and greater difficulties if he had them, were to be most readily and abundantly cleared.” Faustus he had now met. “Of pleasing discourse,” and “speaking fluently and in better terms,” he had uttered only “the self-same things which other disciples had been wont to say.” “Delighted verily with his action and feeling when disputing, and with his choice and readiness of words to clothe his ideas,” and, “with many others, and more loudly than

they, praising and extolling him,"—he had, on a nearer study of him, found him "first utterly ignorant of liberal sciences, save grammar, and that but in an ordinary way." And, being "ignorant of those arts in which he thought he excelled," how should he "open and solve" the graver difficulties which perplexed Augustine's conscience?

Faustus himself, indeed, had rather captivated Aurelius' generous heart; for "he was not one of those talking persons, many of whom he had endured, who, undertaking to teach him these things, said nothing." This man "had a heart, though not right towards God, yet neither altogether treacherous to himself." Not wholly ignorant of his own ignorance, and not ashamed to confess it,—“he did not rashly entangle himself in a dispute, from which he could neither retreat, nor extricate himself fairly.” And for this modesty Augustine “liked him the better.”

But all the more did he now begin to dislike the doctrine which even “this ingenuous advocate had failed to defend.” His “zeal for the writings of Manichæus was blunted;” for, if

he, "who in such wise presumed to be a teacher, guide, chief, that whoso followed him thought that he followed not man but God's Holy Spirit, were once convicted of having taught anything false,"—was not "so great madness" to be detested and utterly rejected?" Thus, "this Faustus, who to so many had been a snare of death, now began, neither willing nor witting it, to loosen that wherein Aurelius had been taken."

Once more he was at his wit's end. Like the prodigal, "no man gave to him." Pride of intellect—

"That pestilent meteor, flitting on the marshes of corruption"—

had been "luring him forward to his death;" now it was once more quenched in darkness. But "Thy hands," says he, "O my God, in the secret purpose of Thy providence, did not forsake my soul; and out of my mother's heart's blood, through her tears night and day poured out, was a sacrifice offered for me unto Thee, and Thou didst deal with me by wondrous ways. Thou didst it, O my God; for

‘the steps of a man are ordered by the Lord, and He shall dispose his way.’ Or how shall we obtain salvation, but from Thy hand, re-making what it made?”

But now a new scene was to open, and a brighter day to dawn.

XI.

“ I was a stricken deer :

With many an arrow deep infix'd

My panting side was charged.”

ON the highway from Carthage might be seen, one afternoon, two travellers—the one, a youth of prepossessing mein, but

“ Rushing madly on, as if trying to forget his being,”

the other, a grave matron, “ holding him by force, that either she might keep him back, or might go with him.” It was—Aurelius Augustine, on his way to Rome,—and his saintly mother, “ grievously bewailing his journey, and following him as far as the sea.”

Night came on; and they repaired to “ a place hard by the ship, where was an Oratory in memory of the blessed Cyprian.”

At midnight, Monica retired—not to rest,

but to her closet to ask the Lord “with many tears” that He “would not suffer” her son “to sail.” Augustine, instead of going to his chamber, “privily departed,” and stepped on board. The wind springing up, the craft set sail; and, before many hours, the shore was out of sight. “I lied to my mother,” says he, “and such a mother!—and escaped.”

It is morning; and Monica is on the shore, “frantic with sorrow, and filling God’s ears with complaints and groans.” She gazes on the waste of waters, and she gazes again; for “she has loved his being with her, as mothers do, though much more than many.” But he is gone! he, “the only son of his mother,” is gone!—and gone—she knows not whither.

Stunned by his “treachery and hardheartedness”—as only such a mother could be,—she “betook herself again to intercede to God for him,” “the earthly part of her affection to him chastened with the allotted scourge of sorrows.” A few days passed; and she “returned to her wonted place,” “daily to water with the streams of her eyes the ground under her face,” but

“knowing not how great joy God was about to work for her out of his absence.”

The scene changes ; and we are in Rome, in the house of a Manichee, where Augustine lies dangerously ill. It is night—fever has come on—and the patient begins to tremble lest he be “parting and departing for ever.”

“I am going down to hell,” he mutters, tremulously ; “I’m going with all my sins !”

“Nay,” whispers the Manichee, “you have loved the good and the beautiful,—and Christ will not reject you.”

“Oh ! I have made His cross a phantom ; and how can a phantom save me ?”

“But truth ! truth ! that is life !”

“No ; there is nothing for me, but to depart into fire and torments, such as my misdeeds deserve.”

“And Monica !” he thought, “how shall she bear her Aurelius’ double death ?” “with which wound,” says he afterwards, “had my mother’s heart been pierced, it could never have been healed. For I cannot express the affection she bare to me, and with how much

more vehement anguish she was now in labour of me in the spirit, than at her child-bearing in the flesh."

But, at its crisis, the fever abated. "Thou recoveredst me then," he writes, "of that sickness, and healedst the son of Thine handmaid for the time in the body, that he might live for Thee to bestow upon him a better and more abiding health."

The exile, however, recovered, only to be "as phrenzied as ever in his sacrilegious heart." A dark cloud hung overhead; and yet, ever and anon, there gleamed upon it that one silver lining—his mother's weeping prayers. "Couldst Thou despise," says he, "and reject from Thy aid the tears of such an one, and those her so strong and unceasing prayers, wherewith she begged of Thee, not gold or silver, nor any mutable or passing good, but the salvation of her son's soul? Thou, by whose gift she was such? Never, Lord. Yea, Thou wert at hand, and wert hearing and doing, in that order wherein Thou hadst determined before that it should be done. Far be it from Thee that Thou shouldest deceive her in Thy

visions and answers, which she laid up in her faithful heart, and, ever praying, urged upon Thee as Thine own handwriting."

Now "beginning diligently to practise that for which he had come to Rome—the teaching of rhetoric,"—his first step was to "gather to his house some to whom, and through whom, he had begun to be known." But many weeks had not passed, when new vexations seemed to whisper that he had not yet found a home.

In Carthage, there had "reigned among the scholars a most disgraceful and unruly license." They would "burst in audaciously," and "with gestures almost frantic," would "disturb all order which any one had established for the good of his scholars;" and, not content with this, they would, "with a wonderful stolidity," commit "divers outrages, punishable by law," but rendered all the more intolerable that "a blinded and blinding 'custom' upheld and made lawful what God's eternal law condemned." But at Rome he had heard, young men studied more peacefully, and were kept under a restraint of more regular discipline;

and, for this "almost only reason," not for "higher gains or dignities," he had "changed his earthly dwelling." Another and sorer evil, however, now harassed him. The youths had not been with him a month, when, "on a sudden, to avoid paying their master's stipend, a number of them plotted together, and removed elsewhere," — "breakers of faith," says he, somewhat warmly, "who, for love of money, held justice cheap." These his "heart hated," — though he feared "not 'with a perfect hatred,' " — for, "perchance, he hated them more because he was to suffer by them, than because they did things utterly unlawful." "I rather," says he, "for my own sake misliked them evil, than liked and wished them good for Thine." But this "perverseness" God "secretly used," to "goad" him onward to the place where He had purposed to meet him in grace.

Otherwise, also, he was ill at ease. Rome "secretly harboured" not a few of that evil sect whose follies he had now detected but still strangely loved; and his "familiar friendship with certain disciples of the fraternity had riveted once more the spell. What was to be done?

“If the wanderer his mistake discern,
Judge his own ways, and sigh for a return,—
Bewildered once, must he bewail his loss
Forever and forever?”

No; one refuge—that which Monica had so often whispered to him—ever and anon floated in a dim haze before his eye.

“The CROSS!

There, and there only (though the deist rave),
There, and there only, is the power to save.
There no delusive hope invites despair;
No mockery meets you, no deception there.
The spells and charms, which blinded you before,
All vanish there, and fascinate no more.”

And, again and again, during these dreary months, the voice of the Crucified seemed to beckon him to rest. “Whither goest thou,” it would say to him, “in rough ways? To what end wouldest thou still and still walk these difficult and toilsome paths? There is no rest where thou seekest it. Thou seekest a blessed life in the land of death: it is not there; for how should there be a blessed life where life itself is not?”

One evening, as he sat in his chamber lonely

and downcast, “memories of Monica and of her early teachings rose up before his troubled spirit.” “Our true Life,” was his secret thought, “came down hither, and bore our death, and slew death, out of the abundance of His own life. And He thundered, calling aloud to us to return hence to Him into that secret place whence He came forth to us—first into the Virgin’s womb wherein He espoused the human creation, our mortal flesh, that it might not be forever mortal, and thence ‘like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, rejoicing as a giant to run his course.’ For He lingered not, but ran, calling aloud by words, deeds, death, life, descent, ascension; crying aloud to us to return to Him. And He departed from our eyes, that we might return into our heart, and there find Him. For He departed; and lo, He is here. Even now, after the descent of Life to thee, wilt thou not ascend, O my soul, and live?”

Had he, then, found rest? Alas! “Heaven’s easy, artless, unencumbered plan,”

“Sorts not with his darling whim;
Though plain to others, ’tis obscure to him.”

And strange indeed were the difficulties which his mind fashioned for itself. "It seemed to me very unseemly" he says, "to believe Thee to have the shape of human flesh, and to be bounded by the bodily lineaments of our members. This was the greatest and almost only cause of my inevitable error." Then this thought presented itself—"I fear to believe our Saviour to have been born in the flesh, lest I should be forced to believe Him defiled by the flesh." And, again:—"There half arises the thought in me, that those philosophers, whom they call 'Academics,' are wiser than the rest; for that they hold that men ought to doubt everything, and lay down that no truth can be comprehended by man." And, summing up all, he adds:—"I despaired of finding in Thy Church the truth from which I had been turned aside."

Cowper writes:—

" Learning oftentimes
Serves but to lead philosophers astray,
Where children would with ease discern the way.
When some hypothesis, absurd and vain,
Has filled with all its fumes a critic's brain,

The will made subject to a lawless force,
All is irregular and out of course ;
And Judgment, drunk, and bribed to lose his way,
Winks hard, and talks of darkness at noon-day."

Such was Augustine, at this new stage of his erratic course. "Panting after the breath of Thy truth," he says, "I could not breathe it pure and untainted." Carthage had offered him only an "unreal happiness;" and now, in Rome, the shadow was shadowy as ever. To what new "dwelling" was the Lord thus leading him "for the salvation of his soul?" At what Bethel was he to find the heavenly ladder by which, "from his weariness," he should pass upward to God?

XII.

“He shewed me the picture of a very grave person. It had eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in its hand, the law of truth was written upon its lips, and the world was behind its back ; it stood as if it pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over its head. And he said, ‘The man whose picture this is, is the only man whom the lord of the place, whither thou art going, hath authorized to be thy guide in all difficult places thou mayest meet with in the way.’ ”

AT Milan, some eight or nine years before, a strange scene had been witnessed.

The bishop was dead; and the emperor Valentinian had summoned the bishops of the province to elect a successor. “Choose,” said he, addressing them, “a man fit to instruct by life, as well as by doctrine; and we ourselves will readily submit our sceptres to his counsels and direction, and, as men exposed to human frailty, will receive his reproofs and admonitions as wholesome physic.”

A youthful Roman, of singular capacity, and of even more singular rectitude, at that

time ruled the province. The youngest son of the emperor's lieutenant in France, he had, on his father's decease, repaired, with his mother and two brothers and an only sister, to Rome, where he quickly rose, at the bar, to such distinction, as to be chosen by the Christian Prefect of Italy to be a member of his Privy Council, and, not long afterwards, governor of Milan. Ambrose had a sister, Marcellina, whose heart had been touched by the love of Christ; and to her he owed a fixed prepossession in favour of "living godliness." "Go," the Prefect had said to him, on setting out for his own province, "and govern more like a bishop than a judge." And, for five years, he had held the reins of office, loved rather as a father, than feared as a bearer of the sword.

The bishops were now assembled in conclave; and day after day passed without any result,—the opposing factions—the Arians and the orthodox — dividing the city, and each urging the claims of their favourite candidate. At length, one morning, as a vast multitude had gathered into the church, bent on open violence, Ambrose hearing of the uproar,

hastened to the spot. His presence, and a few calming words, sufficed to quell the storm; but scarcely had he sat down, when, amidst the dead silence, an "infant voice" whispered, "Ambrose is bishop." At once, the whole assembly, "catching the word, as if a voice from heaven," shouted, "Ambrose shall be the man!" The sound of faction was hushed; and, "by universal consent, he who had come, as the governor, simply to keep the peace, found himself suddenly summoned to feed and to govern Christ's flock." After much hesitation, he yielded, and entered on his new function.

Not unworthily did he "fulfil his ministry." Devoting many hours daily to the study of the Scriptures and to prayer, he would come forth among his fellows with a certain heavenly halo about him, which seemed to say that he had been on the mount with God.

"Paul's love of Christ, and steadiness unbribed,
Were copied close in him, and well transcribed."

With great plainness he rebuked the evils of the day, not shrinking from the most

unsparing denunciations of the prevailing "fashionable sins." The poor were his "stewards and treasurers;" and the humblest and the meanest found him easy of access. "I confess," said he, unfolding the secret of his rare sympathy and lowliness, "my debts were greater than those of the penitent woman, and more was forgiven me, who was called into the ministry from the noise of the forum and from the terror of judicial administration. Yet, if we cannot equal her, the Lord Jesus knows how to support the weak, and to bring with Himself the fountain of living water. He came to the grave Himself. O that Thou wouldest come, Lord Jesus, to this my sepulchre of corruption, and wash me with Thy tears! It shall be said, 'Behold, a man, taken from the midst of secular vanity, remains Thy minister, not by his own strength, but by the grace of Christ.' Preserve, Lord, Thy gift."

One day, a young man, a personal friend, came to him, desiring ordination. Possessed of ample learning, and not wanting in gifts, he yet had about him a certain air of lightness which wounded Ambrose's heart. "I am

sorry to refuse you," said he; "but I cannot help it. I dare not commit to you the care of precious souls." And, on another occasion, warning his clergy against certain "feastings" and "gay entertainments," he remarked—"What have we to do with such scenes? Why do you not revisit Christ, speak to Christ, hear Christ? We speak to Him, when we pray: we hear Him when we read the Divine oracles. We received the ministry to attend on the service of Christ, not to pay court to men."

To the feet of that "best of men," Augustine was now "unknowing led" by God, that by him he might "knowingly be led to God."

The citizens of Milan, in want of a "rhetoric reader" for their city, had "sent to Rome to the prefect," to look out a fit man, and to "send him at the public expense." Symmachus had relations with the Manichees; and, "through those very persons — intoxicated with Manichean vanities — to be freed from whom he was to go (neither, however, knowing it)," he "made application to be tried by

setting him some subject, and so be sent." He was successful; and he set out.

"To Milan," says he, "I came—to Ambrose the bishop, Thy devout servant, whose eloquent discourse did then plentifully dispense unto Thy people the flour of Thy wheat, the gladness of Thy oil, and the sober inebriation of Thy wine." The "man of God" received him "as a father," "shewing him an episcopal kindness on his coming." And Augustine "henceforth began to love him—at first, indeed, not as a teacher of truth, but as a person kind to himself." Day after day, he would steal away into some secret corner, to listen to the earnest preacher, "hanging on his words attentively," and "delighted with the sweetness of his discourse, more recondite, yet in manner less winning and harmonious, than that of Faustus;"—though "of the matter there was no comparison; for, the one was wandering amid Manichean delusions, the other teaching salvation most soundly."*

* Possidius, Augustine's friend and biographer, remarks, in his brief notes on this period:—"Hujus verbi Dei prædicatoris frequentissimis in ecclesia disputationibus adstans in populo, intendebat suspensus atque affixus."

Bacon describes certain "idols of the cave" which hinder the mind from reaching the sunlight. Augustine was drawing nearer to the light "by little and little, and unconsciously;" but two "idols" met him, making him feel that "salvation was far from sinners such as he then stood before God."

He "could not imagine any substance but such as was wont to be seen with the eyes;" and, so, unable to "conceive a spiritual substance," he would fain have taken refuge once more in the "Academic" infidelity, "doubting of everything, and wavering between all,"—though "to the philosophers," he says, who were "without the saving name of Christ," "I utterly refused to commit the cure of my sick soul." A darker idol, however, enslaved him. He was "gross-hearted." His "concubine" had followed him to Milan; and his "heart cleaved" to her with a guilty affection. "Habits," it has been said, .

"Are soon assumed; but, when we strive
To strip them off, 'tis being flay'd alive."

Augustine was "the slave of lust;" the "dis-

ease of his soul was kept up with vigour;" and to surrender his idol would have been "to tear his heart and wound it and bleed it."

The result was a filmy darkness which no reasonings could penetrate.

"That prize belongs to none but the sincere;
The least obliquity is fatal here."

No wonder he listened to Ambrose, "not with the intent he ought, but, as it were, trying his eloquence, whether it answered the fame thereof, or flowed fuller or lower than had been reported," whilst of "the matter" he was "as a careless and scornful looker-on."

And yet, "though taking no pains to learn what the preacher spoke, but only to hear how he spoke," there "came into his mind oftentimes, together with the words which he would choose, the things which he would refuse:" for he "could not separate them;" since, while "he opened his heart to admit 'how eloquently he spoke,' " there "also entered, though as yet by degrees, 'how truly he spoke.' "

The "Catholic faith now began to appear to him a thing capable of defence." It had

“learned maintainers,” who “could at large and with some show of reason answer objections;” and, though it was “not a way to be held” to the condemnation of his old belief, he now blamed his recent “despair that no answer could be given to such as hated and scoffed at the law and the prophets.” The “Catholic cause” was “not, indeed, as yet victorious;” but it seemed to him now “in such sort not vanquished.”

XIII.

“The touching recollection of her prayers shall arrest the strong man in his sins.”

MONICA was still at Thegaste, at her “wonted place,” interceding for her son.

“How strong, yet how most weak! in utter poverty how rich!

Behold that fragile form!

Hath not thy heart said of her—‘Alas! poor child of weakness?’

Thou hast erred; Goliath of Gath stood not in half her strength:

She is the King’s remembrancer, and steward of many blessings;

Holding the buckler of security over her unthankful son.

For that weak fluttering heart is strong in faith assured;

Dependence is her might, and behold—she prayeth.”

Time had not assuaged her anxiety; for, week by week, did she pour “fourth more co-

pious prayers and tears," bewailing him "as one dead," and "carrying him forth upon the bier of her thoughts, that God might say to the son of the widow, 'Young man! I say unto thee, arise.'"

Augustine, alluding long afterwards to this season, writes:—"Wouldest Thou, God of mercies, 'despise the contrite and humbled heart' of that chaste and sober widow; so frequent in almsdeeds; so full of duty and service to Thy saints; twice a-day, morning and evening, without any intermission, coming to Thy church, not for idle tattlings and old wives' fables, but that she might hear Thee in Thy discourses, and Thou her in her prayers? Couldst Thou despise and reject from Thy aid the tears of such an one?"

At length, one morning, she set out from her humble home; and going on board a ship which was in the harbour, she sailed for Genoa. A day or two passed, and the vessel was heaving amidst one of those storms which visit that sea. Rickety and leaky, the craft creaked and groaned, as if each moment she would founder; and the sailors, in consternation, were

preparing for the worst. But one heart was calm that night. "Be not troubled," said the mysterious passenger, "I know we shall have a safe arrival." It was Monica, "comforting the very mariners, by whom passengers, unacquainted with the deep, used rather to be comforted when troubled." She "believed in Christ," says Augustine, "that, before she departed this life, she should see her son a Catholic believer."

Standing on deck, one brilliant morning, as they entered the harbour of Genoa, she gazed with a strange emotion on the magnificent scene. Another traveller, one day, wrote on that spot :—

"The mountains of this glorious land
Are conscious beings to mine eye,
When at the break of day they stand
Like giants, looking through the sky
To hail the sun's unrisen car,
That gilds their diadems of snow,
While one by one, as star by star,
Their peaks in ether glow.

"Their silent presence fills my soul,
When, to the horizontal ray,
The many-tinctured vapours roll
In evanescent wreaths away,

And leave them naked on the scene
The emblems of eternity,
The same as they have ever been,
And shall for ever be ! ”

But Monica, that morning, had an eye for one object only in the landscape. Her lost one was there ; and over him her bowels yearned, “ with sorrow seeking what in sorrow she had brought forth, and knowing not how great joy God was about to work for her.” She landed ; and, before noon, she was on her way to Milan.

In a gaol at Milan, a prisoner knelt, one evening, weeping great tears. “ O my God,” he cried, “ I had abandoned Thee ! I see Thee again : I love Thee. I repent that I have so insulted Thee ! ” On a shelf beside him lay a Bible, covered with dust. For six or seven days, he had not opened it ; and, instead, he had taken to amusing himself with “ foolish pleasantries,” “ singing with a pretended merriment.”

One morning, the gaoler’s child came in, and Silvio Pellico caressed it and smiled. “ Since you have left off reading that villain of a book,”

said the child, with an artless simplicity, pointing to the neglected Bible, and repeating some epithets which he had heard probably from the lips of the priest, “you do not look so sad as before.” Blushing with shame, he took the book from the shelf; and, brushing away the dust with a napkin and opening it, his eye caught these words—“And He said to His disciples, it is impossible but that offences will come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.” “What!” thought he with himself; “does this child suppose, by the dust on my Bible, that I have become more sociable and pleasant through forgetting God?”

Then, turning to his little visitor and kissing him, he said, half playfully, yet “completely desolate at having so scandalised him”—“You little rogue! this is not a villain-book; during the several days that I have neglected it, I am become much worse. My singing, which you have heard, is only a force-put; and my ill-humour, which I try to drive away when your

mother lets you in to see me, comes all back when I am alone."

The child had scarcely gone out, when, "with indescribable emotion," Silvio placed his Bible on a chair—knelt down upon the earth to read—and, though unused to weep, burst into tears. For more than an hour, he "read and lamented," ashamed of his grievous sin, and vowing never again to separate from God, for ever. At length, he rose, full of confidence in the thought that God was with him, and that he had "pardoned his delirium!" And now he was girded for any trial. "Yesterday," said he, my misfortunes, the torments of my impending trial, the probability of torture, seemed like huge, frowning precipices; now they appeared to me a very little thing. I can rejoice in suffering, since I may fulfil a sacred duty, which is, to obey the Saviour in suffering with resignation."

That solitary traveller, who was now entering Milan, was to be to Aurelius another gaoler's child.

XIV.

“Come, then—a still small whisper in your ear—
He has no hope who never had a fear ;
And he that never doubted of his state,
He may perhaps—perhaps he may—too late.”

ARRIVED in the city, Monica found herself, after an hour or two's search, beneath her son's humble roof, clasping the erring one to her heart. “I am not a Manichee now,” he whispered, as if to soothe her bleeding spirit.

“Not overjoyed,” he wrote afterwards, “as at something unexpected,” she was “shaken with no tumultuous exultation, when she heard that what she daily in tears had desired of the Lord, was already so far realized.”

“But,” Aurelius proceeded, anxious not to encourage in her undue hopes, “though rescued from falsehood, I have not yet attained the truth ; and I almost despair of ever finding it. I see not a way open for man to God.”

“I know,” she replied, calmly, “that He who has promised the whole, will one day give the rest. I will see you a Christian yet, before I die.”

And “so,” says Augustine, “she poured forth to Thee, Fountain of Mercies, more copious prayers and tears, that Thou wouldst hasten Thy help, and enlighten my darkness; for, as one dead, though to be re-awakened by Thee, she carried me forth upon the bier of her thoughts, that Thou mightest say to the son of the widow, ‘Young man, I say unto thee, arise;’ and he should revive and begin to speak, and Thou shouldest deliver him to his mother.”

That very evening, “hastening eagerly to the church, she hung upon the lips of Ambrose;” for, by this time, she knew that by him Aurelius had been “brought to that doubtful state of faith he was now in;”—and she “loved him as an angel of God.” Aurelius was at her side; and, as she listened intently to the preacher, she “prayed for the fountain of that water which ‘springeth up unto life everlasting,’”—“anticipating most

confidently," that, "after the access, as it were, of a sharper fit, which physicians called 'the crisis,'" her son "would pass from his present sickness unto health."

Henry Martyn, one day, said—"I fear I have not yet learned the secret of true happiness—a poor and contrite spirit." Aurelius Augustine "panted after honours, gains, marriage." In these "desires," indeed, he had "undergone most bitter crosses, God deriding him, and in mercy suffering nothing to grow sweet to him which was not Himself. Still his soul was held fast in that "bird-lime of death." "I did not yet groan in my prayers," he says, "that Thou wouldest help me; but my spirit was wholly intent on learning, and restless to dispute. And Ambrose, himself, as the world counts happy, I esteemed a happy man, whom personages so great held in such honour; only his celibacy seemed to me a painful course."

On one occasion, as he was "preparing to recite a panegyric of the emperor, wherein he was to utter many a lie, and, lying, was to be applauded by those who knew he lied," and

as his heart was “panting with these anxieties, and boiling with the feverishness of consuming thoughts,” he observed on the street a poor beggar—then, he supposed, “with a full belly,”—unusually “jolly, and joking, and joyous.” Turning to a friend who was with him, he heaved a deep sigh, and spoke of “the many sorrows of our phrenzies.” “By all such efforts of ours,” he wrote afterwards, referring to the incident, “as those wherein I then toiled, dragging along, under the goading of desire, the burden of my own wretchedness, and, by dragging, augmenting it, we yet looked to arrive only at that very joyousness whither that beggar-man had arrived before us who should never, perchance, attain it. For, what he had obtained by means of a few begged pence, the same was I plotting for by many a toilsome turning and winding—the joy of a temporary felicity. For he, verily, had not the true joy; but yet I, with those my ambitious designs, was seeking one much less true. And certainly he was joyous, I anxious; he void of care, I full of fears.”

And he added:—“But, should any ask me,

‘Had I rather be merry or fearful?’ I would answer, Merry. Again, if he asked, ‘Had I rather be such as he was, or what I then was?’ I should choose to be myself, though worn with cares and fears,—but out of wrong judgment,—for, was it the truth? For I ought not to prefer myself to him, because more learned than he,—seeing I had no joy therein, but sought to please men by it—and that, not to instruct, but simply to please. Wherefore also,” he concludes, “Thou didst break my bones with the staff of Thy correction.”

In a little chamber of the cathedral, sat, daily, hour after hour, a holy man intent on “some book,”—“his eye gliding over the pages, and his heart searching out the sense, but his voice and tongue at rest.” It was Ambrose, husbanding intently “the small intervals which he obtained, free from the din of others’ business, for the recruiting of his mind.” Not a morning passed without “multitudes of busy people, whose weaknesses he served,” pressing one by one into his presence to propound some hard question; and it was

noticed that rarely did any one come out without a radiant smile, as if the good bishop had the tongue of the learned, speaking a word in season to him that was weary.

Oftentimes, after the others were away, two strangers would linger wistfully about, half afraid to enter, yet not able to forego the privilege of a brief colloquy. It was Monica and Aurelius. One day, the last visitor had gone, and all was now still, when at length they ventured in.

“It generally happened,” he writes, alluding to those interviews, “when we had come (for no man was forbidden to enter, nor was it his wont that any who came should be announced to him), we saw him thus reading to himself, and never otherwise; and, having long sat silent (for who durst intrude on one so intent?) we were fain to depart, conjecturing that he might be loath to be taken off; for, perchance, he dreaded lest, if the author he read should deliver anything obscurely, some attentive or perplexed hearer might desire him to expound it, or to discuss some of the harder questions.” A brief moment was all they durst to occupy;

but Ambrose always had a gracious word for them. Monica, especially, "so fervent in spirit," touched his tender heart. "When he saw me," says her son, with the warmth of filial affection so peculiar to him, "he often burst forth into her praises, congratulating me that I had such a mother."

But Augustine still "doubted, imagining that the way of life could not be found out." Not venturing to reveal to any ear—even to Ambrose's or to Monica's—"the tides of his feelings, or the abyss of his danger,"—he went on stumbling in the shadow of death, resisting Him who "had prepared the medicines of faith, and had applied them to the diseases of the whole world, and had given them so great authority." "I kept my heart," he says, "from assenting to anything, fearing to fall headlong; but, by hanging in suspense, I was the worse killed." A new expedient was attempted.

In his native town of Thagaste, there had lived a young man, of high parentage and of "great towardliness to virtue." Some years his junior, Alypius had joined the rhetorician's class, first at Thagaste, and afterwards

at Carthage, a warm friendship springing up between them, "the pupil loving his master much because he seemed to him kind and learned." Drawn by "the whirlpool of Carthaginian habits" into "the madness of the Circus," the youthful student had been "miserably tossed therein," until his "deadly doating upon it" seemed likely to "throw away so great promise," and "undo so good a wit." One day, as Augustine "was sitting in his accustomed place, with his scholars before him," Alypius, after a protracted absence, had "entered, greeted him, sat down, and applied his mind to what was then in hand." As the teacher proceeded, a simile from the Circensian games occurred to him, "as likely to make what he would convey pleasanter and plainer, seasoned with biting mockery of those whom that madness had enthralled." "God!" says Augustine, "Thou knowest that I then thought not of curing Alypius of that infection; but he took it wholly to himself, and thought that I said it simply for his sake. And, whence another would have taken occasion of offence with me, that right-minded

youth took as a ground of being offended at himself, and of loving me more fervently." It was God Himself "making of his heart and tongue burning coals by which to set on fire the hopeful mind thus languishing, and so to cure it." "That his amendment," Augustine adds, "might plainly be attributed to Thyself, Thou effectedst it through me, but unknowingly." That very day, Alypius had "burst out of the so deep pit wherein he had been willfully plunged and been blinded by its wretched pastimes; and "he had shaken his mind with a strong self-command; whereupon all the filths of the Circensian pastimes flew off from him, nor came he again thither."

But the student had escaped the Circus only to be entangled in the Manichean meshes of his master. A "shadowy and counterfeit virtue," "reaching not the depths of virtue," had next "beguiled his soul." Setting out for Rome to study law, and there once more associated with his old teacher, he had "become involved more and more hopelessly in the same superstition," loving in the Manichees

that "show of continency, which he supposed true and unfeigned."

One night, however, accosted on the street by "divers of his acquaintance and fellow-students coming from dinner," they "with a familiar violence had haled him, vehemently refusing and resisting, into the amphitheatre, during those cruel and deadly shows." On the way, he had protested to them, that, "though they might hale his body to the place and set it there, they could not and would not force him to turn his mind or his eyes to them. "I shall then be absent," he had said, "while present, and so shall overcome both you and them." "We shall see," exclaimed his friends, incredulously; and they led him on to the charmed spot. A few minutes had passed, and "the whole place kindled with that savage pastime." Alypius "closing the passages of his eyes," had determined not to suffer his mind to "range abroad after such evils." "Would," says Augustine, "he had stopped his ears also! For, in the fight, when one fell, a mighty cry of the whole people striking him strongly, overcome

by curiosity, and as if prepared to be superior to it whatsoever it were, he opened his eyes, and was stricken with a deeper wound in his soul than the other whom he desired to behold was in his body ; and he fell more miserably than he upon whose fall that mighty noise was raised which entered through his ears and unlocked his eyes to make way for the striking and beating down of a soul bold rather than resolute, and the weaker in that it had presumed on itself which ought to have relied on Thee. For so soon," Augustine adds, "as he saw that blood, he therewith drank down savageness ; nor turned away, but fixed his eye, drinking in phrenzy, unawares, and was delighted with that guilty sight, and intoxicated with the bloody pastime. Nor was he now the man he came, but one of the throng he came unto,—yea, a true associate of theirs that brought him thither. Why say more ? He beheld, shouted, kindled, carried thence with him the madness which should goad him to return not only with them who first drew him thither, but also before them, yea, and to draw in others."

Alypius had been destined to the law, though "more to please his parents than himself." At Rome he had acted as a petty judge ; and, one day, a very powerful senator, accustomed to "have a thing allowed him which by the laws was unallowed," had appeared as a suitor, demanding with an imperious air an instant decision in his favor. The judge had "resisted: a bribe was promised ; with all his heart he scorned it: threats were held out ; he trampled upon them ; —all wondering at so unwonted a spirit, which neither desired the friendship nor feared the enmity of one so great and so mightily renowned for innumerable means of doing good or evil."

Augustine had not been long in Milan when he found Alypius once more at his side. He had been appointed "assessor;" and "week after week," says his friend, "he sat with an uncorruptness much wondered at by others, he wondering at others rather who could prefer gold to honesty." Proof at once against "the bait of covetousness and the goad of fear," the youthful lawyer, already "faithful in a little," was one day to be "faithful also

in much." Meanwhile, "he, being such," says Augustine, "did at that time cleave to me, and with me wavered in purpose, what course of life was to be taken."

Another young man also hung upon Augustine's lips. A native of Carthage, and possessing an excellent family estate, Nebridius had left his home and its many pleasant attractions, and, attracted by the rhetorician, had "come to Milan, for no reason but that with him he might live in a most ardent search after truth and wisdom." "Like me," Augustine writes, "he sighed; like me, he wavered,—an ardent searcher after true life, and a most acute examiner of the most difficult questions."

The three friends—each groping darkly after the same dim and hazy shadow—determined to combine their energies after a fashion quite unique. They were to retire into a secluded retreat—to live in common—to gaze with a certain ecstatic fervor upon the beautiful ideal, "truth." "We thought," Augustine writes, describing the scheme, "there might be some ten persons in this society; some of whom were very rich. We had settled, also, that

two annual officers should provide all things necessary, the rest being undisturbed." And, for a brief interval, they met, and speculated, and gazed. "Thus were there," he says again, "the mouths of three indigent persons, sighing out their wants one to another." It was a dreary time. Often, often, would they groan out this complaint—"How long shall these things be?" And yet, "so saying, they forsook them not; for, as yet, there dawned nothing certain, which, these forsaken, they might embrace."

One day, as he sat alone with Monica, conscience seemed to awake once more from her slumber. "Life," it whispered, "is vain; death uncertain; if it steal upon thee on a sudden, in what state shalt thou depart thence? and where shalt thou learn what here thou hast neglected? and shalt not thou rather suffer the punishment of thy negligence? Wherefore, then, delay to abandon worldly hopes, and to give thyself wholly to seek after God and the blessed life?" The scheme of the three friends dwindled into romance—there *must* be something more real. "This plan,"

he writes, "which had been so well moulded, fell to pieces in our hands, and was utterly dashed and cast aside." The "philosophical union" had been tried and found wanting.

XV.

“None sends his arrow to the mark in view,
Whose hand is feeble, or his aim untrue.”

AUGUSTINE was now in his thirty-first year. “Deceased,” he writes, “was that my evil and abominable youth; and I was passing into early manhood, the more defiled by vain things as I grew in years.”

Monica, meanwhile, intent on “wiling him away from his guilty passion,” was “making a continual effort to have him married.” “I wooed,” he says, “and was promised, chiefly through my mother’s pains.” And, again:— “A maiden was asked in marriage two years under the fit age, and, as pleasing, was waited for.”

The next step was, to “tear his concubine from his side, as a hindrance to his marriage.” His heart “clave unto her;” and, at the parting, it “was torn, and wounded, and bleeding.”

He sent her away, however ; and she returned to Africa, leaving with him his “son by her.” But scarcely was she gone, when “impatient of delay,” he “procured another, though no wife.”

“What strange pollutions doth he wed,
And make his own! as if none knew but he!
No man shall beat into his head,
That Thou within his curtains drawn canst see.
They are of cloth,
Where never yet came moth.”

It seemed as if he was “joined to his idols,” and as if God *must* “let him alone.”

But conscience still whispered her behests. “To Thee,” says he, “be praise!” Glory to Thee, Fountain of mercies! I was becoming more miserable, and Thou nearer. Thy right hand was continually ready to pluck me out of the mire, and to wash me thoroughly; and I knew it not; nor did anything call me back from a yet deeper gulf of carnal pleasures but the fear of death and of Thy judgment to come—which, amid all my changes, never departed from my breast.”

And he adds:—“While these winds shifted

and drove my heart this way and that, time passed on, and I delayed to turn to the Lord, deferring from day to day to live in Thee and to die to myself. Loving a happy life, I feared it in its own abode, and sought it by fleeing from it. O crooked paths! Woe to the audacious soul, which hoped, by forsaking Thee, to gain some better thing! Turned it hath, and turned again, upon back, sides, and belly, yet all was painful; and Thou alone rest."

A new vanity now harrassed him. He had heard, from the teaching of Ambrose, that "the cause of our doing ill" was "free-will," and that we "suffered ill" because of God's "just judgment." Not able "clearly to discern it," and endeavouring to draw his soul's vision out of that deep pit," he "was again plunged therein, and, endeavouring often, was plunged back as often."

One day a gleam of light broke in. "I saw," says he, "as well that I had a will, as that I lived: when, then, I did will or nill anything, I was most sure that none other than myself did will and nill; and I all but saw that there was the cause of my sin."

But again an eclipse of faith came. "I said, Who made me? Did not my God, who is not only good, but goodness itself? Whence, then, came I to will evil and nill good? who set this in me, and engrafted into me this plant of bitterness, seeing I was wholly formed by my most sweet God? If the devil were the author, whence that same devil? And, if he also, by his own perverse will, of a good angel became a devil, whence, again, came in him that evil will whereby he became a devil, seeing the whole nature of angels was made by that most good Creator?"

"Heaven from above, and conscience from within,
Cried in his startled ear—Abstain from sin!"

But "his deeds were evil;" and he hated the light which condemned them.

"Thus men go wrong with an ingenious skill,
Bend the straight rule to their own crooked will;
And with a clear and shining lamp supplied,
First put it out, then take it for a guide."

Conscience once more startled him. "I had observed of other sceptics," says he, "that, through enquiring the origin of evil, they were

filled with evil. I had sought 'whence is evil?' and had sought in an evil way, not seeing the evil in my very search. But now again I was overcharged with most gnawing cares, lest I should die ere I had found the truth. What were the pangs of my teeming heart! what groans, O my God! yet even then were Thine ears open, and I knew it not: and when, in silence, I vehemently sought, 'whence was evil?' those silent contritions of my soul were strong cries unto Thy mercy. Thou knewest what I suffered, and no man. For what was that which was thence through my tongue distilled into the ears of my most familiar friends? Did the whole tumult of my soul, for which neither time nor utterance sufficed, reach them? Yet went up the whole to Thy hearing, all which I roared out from the groanings of my heart. These things had grown out of my wound; for Thou 'humbledst the proud like one that is wounded.' By inward goads didst Thou rouse me, that I should be ill at ease until Thou wert manifested to my inward sight."

A new snare entangled him. Procuring,

“by means of one puffed up with most unnatural pride,” “certain books of the Platonists,”—he was ensnared into a search for “incorporeal truth,”—believing that the Word,” which had been “in the beginning with God,” was “the light of men,” but not believing that “the Word was made flesh.” And for a little while it seemed as if he had grasped something, and as if his heart had found repose. “He that knows the Truth,” he would whisper to himself complacently, “knows what that Light is; and he that knows it knows eternity. Love knoweth it. O Truth who art Eternity! and Love who art Truth! and Eternity who art Love! Thou art my God; to thee do I sigh night and day.”

But a few months passed, and these sighings, apparently so ethereal and so devout, left him desolate as before. “I prated,” says he, “as one well skilled; but, had I not sought Thy way in Christ our Saviour, I had proved to be not skilled, but killed. For, now, I had begun to wish to seem wise, being filled with mine own punishment; yet I did not mourn, but scorn, puffed up with knowledge. For

where was that charity, building upon the 'foundation' of humility, 'which is Christ Jesus?' "

The void in that heart could be filled only by a personal Christ; and to HIM he now began, darkly and uncertainly, to grope his way. "Thy Word was the One," said he, "the Eternal One. Truth built for itself in this lower world a lowly habitation of our clay, whereby to abase from themselves such as would be subdued, and to bring them over to Himself,—allaying their swelling, and fomenting their love, to the end they might go on no further in self-confidence, but rather consent to become weak, seeing before their feet the Divinity weak by taking our coats of skin, and, wearied, might cast themselves down upon it, and it, rising, might lift them up." And yet he had not rest. "A narrow way," he says, "presented itself from whose straitness I shrank." That "narrow way" was the atoning sacrifice—the blood of the slain Lamb. He could not brook the humiliation of going down into the dust as a guilty, condemned sinner; and therefore the

blood had no attractions for him—the Cross was still “foolishness.”

Thus, from “the mountain’s shaggy top” he seemed to “see the land of peace;” but he “found no way thither,—in vain essaying through ways unpassable, opposed and beset by fugitives and deserters under their captain the lion and the dragon.”

“Nothing but drouth and dearth, but bush and brake,
Which way soe’er I look, I see.”

XVI.

“ Who, when great trials come,
Nor seeks, nor shuns them ; but doth calmly stay,
Till he the thing and the example weigh :
All being brought into a sum,
What place or person calls for, he doth pay.”

THERE lived in those days, at Rome, a grave, learned man, “skilled in the liberal sciences,” and so eminently successful as a “Rhetoric Professor,” that the rare honour had been decreed to him of a statue in the Forum. For years, he had been a devoted worshipper of idols, “defending with a thundering eloquence” the superstitious rites,—until now, in his old age, Victorinus might be seen poring most studiously over the Christian Scriptures which a friend had placed before him.

“Understand,” said he, one morning, to his friend, “that I am already a Christian.” “I will not believe it,” was the reply, “nor will I

rank you among Christians, unless I see you in the Church of Christ." "Do walls, then, make Christians?" he would answer, half in jest, and half trembling; for he "feared to offend his friends, proud demon-worshippers, from the height of whose Babylonian dignity, as from 'cedars of Libanus' which the Lord had not yet broken down, he supposed the weight of enmity would fall upon him."

Some months passed; and, one day calling upon Simplicianus, he said, suddenly—"Go we to church; I wish to avow myself a Christian." At once the two set out, his friend scarce able to "contain himself for joy." As they hastened along, the venerable Roman told, with tears in his eyes, how, after long and earnest musings, the light had at last dawned, and how he "feared to be denied by Christ before the holy angels, should he now be afraid to confess Him before men." Arrived at the humble place of meeting, he gave in his name for baptism, "submitting his neck to the yoke of humility, and subduing his forehead to the reproach of the cross."

It was the custom at Rome for the catechu-

men to ascend an elevated platform, and, in the sight of all the people, to deliver a profession of his faith. When Victorinus came forward, the brethren offered to receive his profession in private—a concession at times made to “such as seemed likely through bashfulness to be alarmed.” But, “choosing rather to profess his salvation in the presence of the holy multitude,” he boldly though meekly went forward,—“each, as he recognised him, whispering his name to his neighbour with the voice of congratulation.” As he stood in front of the assembly, “there ran a low murmur through all the mouths of the rejoicing multitude—‘Victorinus! Victorinus!’” “Sudden was the burst of rapture,” writes the quaint chronicler, “that they saw him; suddenly were they hushed, that they might hear him. He pronounced the true faith with an excellent boldness; and all wished to draw him into their very heart: yea, by their love and joy they drew him thither; such were the bands wherewith they drew him. That day Victorinus put on Christ, “Rome wondering, the Church rejoicing.”

A few months afterwards, Simplicianus ar-

rived at Milan; and, one morning, Augustine was relating to him "the mazes of his wanderings." He "seemed to me," Aurelius writes, "a good servant of Thine; and Thy grace shone in him." Setting before him his anxieties, he entreated him to "tell him, out of the store of his experience, which was the fittest way for one in his case to walk in God's paths." Simplicianus related to him the story of the Roman Professor's trial and triumph of faith. "And immediately," says Augustine, "I was on fire to imitate him.

"But," interposed his friend, "there was a law made in the reign of Julian forbidding any Christian to teach the liberal sciences or oratory; and Victorinus, obeying this law, gave up all for Christ." Augustine was not damped. "When I heard," he writes, "how he chose rather to give over the wordy school, than Thy Word, by which Thou 'makest eloquent the tongues of the dumb,' he seemed to me not more resolute than blessed, in thus having found opportunity to wait on Thee only. Which thing," he adds, "I was sighing for,

bound as I was, not with another's irons, but by my own iron will."

He had "heard from Ambrose" how "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh;" and now he "understood, by his own experience, what he had heard." "My will," says he, "the enemy held; and thence he had made a chain for me, and bound me. For of a froward will was a lust made; and a lust, served, became custom; and custom, not resisted, became necessity. By which links, as it were, joined together (whence I called it a chain), a hard bondage held me enthralled. But that new will, which had begun to be in me—freely to serve Thee and to wish to enjoy Thee, O God, the only assured pleasantness—was not yet able to overcome my former wilfulness, strengthened by age. Thus my two wills—one new, and the other old, one carnal, the other spiritual—struggled within me; and, by their discord, they undid my soul."

And he adds:—"Myself, verily, either way; yet, more myself in that which I approved in myself, than in that which in myself I disap-

proved. For, in this last, it was now for the more part not myself ; because, in much, I rather endured against my will, than acted willingly. But I, still under service to the earth, refused to fight under Thy banner, fearing as much to be freed of all encumbrances as we should fear to be encumbered with it. Thus, with the baggage of this present world was I held down pleasantly as in sleep ; and the thoughts wherein I meditated on Thee were like the efforts of such as would awake, who yet, overcome with a heavy drowsiness, are again drenched therein."

One morning, he was at church ; and a vast concourse was there, " one going this way, and another that way." Anew the feeling rose in him, " Why not surrender my soul to God ? why lead any longer a secular life ? " And, for a day or two, it seemed as if he were " escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowler." But, once more, he gave way. " Still I was enthralled," says he, " with the love of women ; and, because of this alone, I was tossed up and down in all beside, faint and wasted with withering cares. Thou calledst to me, ' Awake,

thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light ;' but I had nothing to answer. 'Thou didst on all sides shew me that what thou saidst was true ; but I, convicted by the truth, had only those dull and drowsy words, 'Anon ! anon !' 'presently !' leave me but 'a little !' As no one would sleep for ever, and, in all men's sober judgment, waking is better,—yet a man for the most part, feeling a heavy lethargy in all his limbs, defers to shake off sleep, and, though half displeased, yet, even after it is time to rise, with pleasure yields to it ; so, was I assured that much better were it for me to give myself up to Thy charity than to give myself over to mine own cupidity : but, though the former course satisfied me and gained the mastery, the latter pleased me and held me mastered. For, 'presently ! presently !' had no present ; and my 'little while' went on for a long while."

The day-dawn, however, was now at hand ; and its rising we proceed to trace.

"What wonders shall I feel, when I shall see,
Thy full-eyed love,
When Thou sha't look me out of pain !"

XVII.

“What pearl is it that rich men cannot buy,
That learning is too proud to gather up?”

WE are in a chamber in Milan, where oftentimes, of an evening, after the business of the day, three friends assemble, to recount their mutual sorrows and to whisper in one another's ears their sighings. By this time, the “books of the Platonists” have been exchanged for the “Epistles of St. Paul;” and, this particular night, as Augustine is sitting alone, with the new instructor before him, Alypius enters, wearied and worn out, being “just released from his third sitting that day to sell his counsel.” They are waiting for Nebridius to join the little circle, when an unusual knock at the door startles them, and the suspicious book is hastily closed. A few moments pass; and there is announced “a high dignitary of the Imperial Court, one Pontitianus,” whom they

recognise as “a countryman from Africa” but have only once or twice met.

After the customary salutation, the visitor sits down beside them at “a table for some game;” but they have not played many minutes, before his eye glances at the book which is lying upon it, and which the friends have just so abruptly shut. Thinking it “one of the books which he once wore himself out in teaching,” he opens it with a heavy sigh; but, “finding it, contrary to his expectation, the Apostle Paul,” he smiles significantly—Augustine blushes—and, before he can utter a word of apology, the stranger relieves his embarrassment by expressing his “joy and wonder that he has on a sudden found this book, and this only, before their eyes.”

Pontitianus was “a saint in Cæsar’s household;” and, that evening, he told the wondering friends the story of God’s dealings with him.

One afternoon, at Triers, as the Emperor and his Court were in the Circus, “taken up with the games,” the courtier had stolen away, with three companions — “agents for public

affairs"—to "walk in gardens near the city-walls." Two and two, they had sauntered on, until "one of the couples," "lighting upon a certain cottage, inhabited by certain saints 'poor in spirit of whom was the kingdom of heaven,' " found a little book narrating the heavenly life of a saint not long departed. This they began to read; and they "admired and kindled at it," until, "filled with an holy love and a sober shame," one of them, "in anger with himself, cast his eyes upon his friend, saying, 'Tell me, I pray thee, what would we attain by all these labours of ours? what aim we at? what serve we for? can our hopes at court rise higher than to be the Emperor's favourites? and, in this, what is there not brittle and full of perils? and by how many perils arrive we at a greater peril? and when arrive we thither? But a friend of God, if I wish it, I become now at once.' "

It was the turning point of his course. "In pain with the travail of a new life, he turned his eyes again upon the book—read on—was changed inwardly—and his mind was stripped of the world." "Now," said he, after a little,

turning to his companion, "I have broken loose from those our hopes, and am resolved to serve God; and this, from this hour, in this place, I begin upon. If thou likest not to imitate me, oppose not." "I will cleave to thee," was the reply, "to partake so glorious a reward, so glorious a service."

It was now late in the evening; and the other two friends, who had been walking in other parts of the garden, arrived at the cottage in search of them. With full hearts, the two related what had passed. "Our purpose is settled," said they; "our will is fixed; and, if you will not join us, pray do not molest us." "Alas!" was the answer, "what shall we do? we envy you your choice; and oh! pray for us." And so, "nothing altered from their former selves, and with hearts lingering on the earth," they betook themselves to the palace.

As the story proceeded, Augustine felt as if God were searching him through and through. "Thou, O Lord, while he was speaking," says he, "didst turn me round towards myself, taking me from behind my back, where I had

placed me, unwilling to observe myself, and setting me before my face, that I might see how foul I was—how crooked and defiled, bespotted and ulcerous.” He “beheld, and stood aghast;” and “whither to flee from himself, he found not.” If he sought to turn his eye from off himself, Pontitianus went on with his relation; and “Thou,” he writes again, “didst set me over against myself, and thrustedst me before mine eyes, that ‘I might find out mine iniquity, and hate it.’ I had known it, but had made as though I saw it not—had winked at it, and forgotten it.”

Slight convictions make slight conversions. But, if ever the foundations were laid deep in a soul, it was, in those days, in the heart of Augustine. “Now,” says he, “the more ardently I loved those whose healthful affections had led them to resign themselves wholly to the Lord to be cured, the more did I abhor myself when compared with them. For many of my years—some twelve—had now run out since my nineteenth, when, upon the reading of Cicero’s ‘Hortensius,’ I was stirred to an earnest love of wisdom; and still I was defer-

ring to reject mere earthly felicity, and to give myself to search out that whereof not the finding only, but the very search, was to be preferred to the treasures and kingdoms of the world though already found, and to the pleasures of the body though spread around me at my will. But I wretched, most wretched, in the very commencement of my early youth, had begged chastity of Thee, saying, ‘Give me chastity and continency, only *not yet.*’ For I feared lest Thou shouldest hear me soon, and cure me of the disease of concupiscence, which I wished to have satisfied rather than extinguished. And I had thought, that I therefore deferred from day to day to reject the hopes of this world and to follow Thee only, because there did not appear aught certain whither to direct my course. And now was the day come wherein I was to be laid bare to myself, and my conscience was to upbraid me.”

Yet the delay, the anxiety, the stings, the protracted law-work, had not fitted him for coming to Christ. Others, who “neither so wore themselves out with seeking it, nor for ten years and more were thinking thereon,”

had had "their shoulders lightened, and had received wings to fly away." As for himself, his ten years' gloomy groping had only left him more guilty and more self-condemned. "Thus was I gnawed within," he writes, "and exceedingly confounded with an horrible shame, while Pontitianus was speaking. And he, having brought to a close his tale and the business he came for, went his way; and I into myself."

As the stranger departed, Augustine and his friend sat for a few moments silent. "What ails us?" at last exclaimed Aurelius, turning to the other (his "forehead, cheeks, eyes, colour, tone of voice," expressing, more emphatically than the words he uttered, that "great contention of his inward dwelling which he had strongly raised against his soul in the chamber of his heart"); "what is it? what heardest thou? The unlearned start up and 'take heaven by force;' and we—with our learning and without heart—lo, where we wallow in flesh and blood! Are we ashamed to follow, because others are gone before? and not ashamed to refuse even to follow?" Some

such words he uttered; and his "fever of mind" tore him away, — Alypius gazing in mute amazement, as his friend suddenly disappeared.

The house they lodged in had a little garden; and, as the master of the house was absent, they could always reckon on finding in the garden a quiet retreat. "Thither," says he, "the tumult of my breast hurried me, where no man might hinder the hot contention wherein I had engaged with myself, until it should end as Thou knewest—I knew not. Only I was healthfully distracted, and dying, to live; knowing what evil thing I was, and not knowing what good thing I was shortly to become. What said I not against myself? With what scourges of condemnation lashed I not my soul, that it might follow me striving to go after Thee! Yet it drew back; refused, but excused not itself. All arguments were spent and confuted; there remained a mute shrinking; and she feared, as she would death, to be restrained from the flux of that custom whereby she was wasting to death."

Seated beneath a shady tree, "as far re-

moved as might be from the house," he was joined, ere long, by Alypius; for "how," says he, "could he forsake me so disturbed?" But his friend's presence did not lessen his privacy; and again he fell into the most bitter self-reproach. "I was troubled in spirit," he writes, "most vehemently indignant, that I entered not into Thy will and covenant, O my God, which 'all my bones cried out' unto me to enter, and praised it to the skies. And therein we enter not by ships, or by chariots, or by feet—no, nor move so far as I had come from the house to that place where we were sitting. For, not to go only, but to go in thither, was nothing else than to will to go, but to will resolutely and thoroughly; not to turn and toss, this way and that, a maimed and half-divided will, struggling, with one part sinking as another rose."

It was the throe of the new birth; and no wonder he felt a bitter pang. "In the very fever of my irresoluteness," he says, "I made with my body many such motions as men sometimes will, but cannot, if either they have not the limbs, or these be bound with bands,

weakened with infirmity, or any other way hindered. Thus, if I tore my hair, or beat my forehead—if, locking my fingers, I clasped my knee,—I willed, I did it; but I might have willed and not done it, if the power of motion in my limbs had not obeyed. So, many things then I did, when ‘to will’ was not itself ‘to be able;’ and I did not what both I longed incomparably more to do, and which soon after, when I should will, I should be able to do; because, soon after, when I should will, I should will thoroughly. For, in these things, the ability was one with the will, and to will was to do; and yet was it not done: and more easily did my body obey the weakest willing of my soul, in moving its limbs at its nod, than the soul obeyed itself to accomplish in the will alone this its momentous will.”

By those painful teachings, he was learning, in these moments, lessons which were to be graven on his heart for ever. “Whence this monstrousness?” he enquires, looking back on that crisis of his inner life; “and to what end? Let Thy merey gleam that I may ask,—if so be the secret penalties of men, and those darkest

pangs of the sons of Adam, may perhaps answer me. Whence is this monstrousness? and to what end? The mind commands the body, and it obeys instantly; the mind commands itself, and is resisted. The mind commands the hand to be moved; and such readiness is there, that command is scarce distinct from obedience. Yet the mind is mind, the hand is body. The mind commands the mind—its own self—to will; and yet it doth not.

Whence this monstrousness?” he again asks; “and to what end? It commands itself, I say, to will, and would not command unless it willed; and what it commands, is not done. But it willeth not entirely; therefore doth it not command entirely. For, so far forth it commandeth as it willeth; and, so far forth is the thing commanded not done, as it willeth not. For the will commandeth that there be a will—not another, but itself. But it doth not command entirely; therefore, what it commandeth, is not. For, were the will entire, it would not even command it to be, because it would already be. It is, therefore, no mon-

strousness partly to will, partly to nill,—but a disease of the mind, that it doth not wholly rise, by truth up-borne, by custom down-borne.”

God was tutoring him thus for his life-work, though he knew it not. He was rooting up from his heart “the mandrake Pride,” though it “cost him groans and writhings;” and, one day, he was to utter the teachings in accents whose echo has not to this hour died away on the ear of Christendom. Another has written—

“ Full of rebellion, I would die
Or fight, or travel, or deny
That Thou hast aught to do with me.
Oh, tame my heart!
It is Thy highest art,
To captivate strongholds to Thee.”

And, again—

“ Oh, smooth my rugged heart, and there
Engrave Thy rev'rend love and fear!
Or make a new one; since the old
Is sapless grown,
And a much fitter stone
To hide my dust, than Thee to hold.”

These humbling truths Augustine was now reading, not in books, but off the living tablet of his own inmost heart; and how could such a man afterwards fail to write confusion upon upon all human pride?

XVIII.

“ There was I found by One who had Himself
Been hurt by the archers. In His side He bore,
And in His hands and feet, the cruel scars ;
With gentle force soliciting the darts,
He drew them forth, and heal’d, and bade me live.”

As he sat, that evening, beneath the tree, his bewildered soul groped its last weary wanderings in the region and shadow of death.

He writes :—“ Thus soul-sick was I, and tormented, accusing myself much more severely than my wont, rolling and turning me in my chain, till that were wholly broken, whereby I now was but just—but still was—held. And Thou, O Lord, pressedst upon me in my inward parts by a severe mercy, redoubling the lashes of fear and of shame, lest I should again give way, and, not bursting that same slight remaining tie, it should recover strength and bind me the faster. For I said within myself:

‘Be it done now ! be it done now !’ and, as I spake, I all but enacted it ; I all but did it, and did it not ; yet sank not back to my former state, but kept my stand hard by, and took breath. And I essayed again, and wanted somewhat less of it, and somewhat less, and all but touched and laid hold of it ; and yet came not at it, nor touched nor laid hold of it ; hesitating to die to death and to live to life : and the worse, whereto I was inured, prevailed more with me than the better, whereto I was unused ; and, the very moment wherein I was to become other than I was, the nearer it approached me, the greater horror did it strike into me ; yet did it not strike me back, nor turned me away, but held me in suspense.”

“Faithful,” one day, was accosted by a deceiver, who promised him, “if he would but turn and dwell with him,” “all manner of fleshly content ;” and, when he “turned to go away from him,” he took hold of his flesh, and gave him such “a deadly twitch back,” that it seemed as if he had pulled part of him after himself. After a like fashion, poor Augustine now felt himself “held by those very toys of

toys, and vanities of vanities"—his "ancient mistresses." "They plucked my fleshly garment," he says, "and whispered softly, 'Dost thou cast us off? and from that moment shall we no more be with thee for ever? and from that moment shall not this or that be lawful to thee for ever?'" And what defilements did they suggest! what shame!"

But it was too late. "I much less than half heard them," he writes, "and they did not openly shew themselves and contradict me, but muttered as it were behind my back, and, as I was departing, privily plucked me, but to look back upon them. Yet they did retard me, so that I hesitated to burst and shake myself free from them, and to spring over whither I was called,—a violent habit saying to me, 'Thinkest thou, thou canst live without them?' But now it spake very faintly. For, on that side whither I had set my face and whither I trembled to go, there appeared unto me the chaste dignity of continency—serene, yet not relaxedly gay, honestly alluring me to come and doubt not, and stretching forth, to receive and embrace me, her holy hand full of multitudes of

good examples; there were so many young men and maidens here, a multitude of youth and of every age, grave widows and aged virgins; and Continnence herself in all, not barren, but ‘a fruitful mother of children’—of joys—by thee, her husband, O Lord. And she smiled on me with a persuasive mockery, as if she would say,—‘Canst not thou what these youths, what these maidens, can? or can they either, in themselves, and not rather in the Lord their God? The Lord their God gave me unto them. Why standest thou in thyself, and so standest not? cast thyself upon Him, fear not He will withdraw Himself that thou shouldest fall; cast thyself fearlessly upon Him, He will receive and will heal thee.’ And I blushed exceedingly; for that I yet heard the muttering of those toys, and hung in suspense. And she again seemed to say,—‘Stop thine ears against those thy unclean members on the earth, that they may be mortified. They tell thee of delights, but not as doth the law of the Lord thy God.’ ”

All this time, he was “in unwonted emotion;” and Alypius had continued “sitting

close by his side, in silence waiting its issue." At length, "a deep consideration having, from the secret bottom of his soul," "drawn together and heaped up all his misery in the sight of his heart, and a mighty storm arising and bringing a mighty shower of tears,"—he "rose from Alypius," that he "might pour it forth wholly in its natural expressions." "Solitude," he says, "was suggested to me as fitter for the business of weeping; so, I retired so far that even his presence could not be a burden to me. Thus was it then with me; and he perceived something of it; for something, I suppose, I had spoken, wherein the tones of my voice appeared choked with weeping, and so risen up. He then remained where we had been sitting, most extremely astonished."

A poet, who himself had travailed, writes—

"With sick and famish'd eyes,
With doubling knees, and weary bones,
To Thee my cries,
To Thee my groans,
To Thee my sighs, my tears ascend,
No end?"

Yes, brother, thy travail is ending now. "I

cast myself down," says he, "I know not how, under a certain fig-tree, giving full vent to my tears; and the floods of mine eyes pushed out 'an acceptable sacrifice to Thee.' And—not, indeed, in these words, yet to this purpose—spake I much unto Thee:—'And Thou, O Lord, how long? how long, Lord, wilt Thou be angry? for ever? Remember not our former iniquities!' for I felt that I was held by them. I sent up these sorrowful words, 'How long? how long?' 'To-morrow, and to-morrow?' 'why not now? why not now? why not is there this hour an end to my uncleanness?' "

"A microscopic cause," it has been said, "often works a long-prepared effect." That evening, in the garden at Milan, the apophthegm was to hold good."

Augustine was still "speaking, and weeping in the most bitter contrition of his heart," when suddenly there fell upon his ear, from a neighbouring house, "a voice, as of a boy or girl, chanting, and oft repeating—'Take up and read! take up and read!'" Not more startling to Saul of Tarsus was the light, and the

voice, that day, on the way to Damascus. "Instantly," says he, "my countenance altered: I began to think most intently whether children were wont, in any kind of play, to sing such words; nor could I remember ever to have heard the like. So, checking the torrent of my tears, I arose, interpreting it to be no other than a command from God to open the book and read the first chapter I should find; for," he adds, "I had heard of Antony, that, coming in during the reading of the Gospel, he received the admonition, as if what was being read was spoken to him—'Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me;' and by such oracle he was forthwith converted unto Thee."

Hastening to the spot where he had left Alypius, he snatched the volume of St. Paul which they had been reading in the room and which he had brought with him to the garden. He opened the book; and his eye fell on that scripture—"Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord

Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”* It was the hour of the spirit-birth. The Lord was at his side, saying, “Live!” “No further would I read,” says he; “nor needed I: for instantly, at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away.”

When the Pilgrim, at the Cross, “stood looking and weeping,” wondering that the sight of the Crucified should have “eased him of his burden,”—“three shining ones came to him, and stripped him of his rags, and clothed him with change of raiment; and Christian, giving three leaps for joy, went on singing—

“‘ Thus far did I come laden with my sin,
Nor could aught ease the grief that I was in,
Till I came hither: what a place is this!
Must here be the beginning of my bliss?
Must here the burden fall from off my back?
Must here the strings that bind it to me crack?
Blest Cross! Blest Sepulchre! blest rather be
The MAN that there was put to death for me!’ ”

Augustine now had found a like rest, and he

* Rom. xiii. 13, 14.

rejoiced with a like lowly joy. "O my God," he exclaimed, "let me with thanksgiving remember and confess unto Thee Thy mercies on me. Let my bones be bedewed with Thy love, and let them say unto Thee, 'Who is like unto Thee, O Lord? Thou hast broken my bonds in sunder. I will offer unto Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving.' "

And, looking back, long afterwards, upon the crisis, he wrote:—"Thy powerful voice said, 'Let there be light, and there was light.'" The gross darkness which had floated before my eyes dissolved in an instant. I felt it scatter, and descried the dawning day, and heard the powerful command; and, full of thankful wonder, I cried out—"Thou verily art God, which has brought me out of darkness and the shadow of death into Thy marvellous light.' Thou spakest that word; and, behold, I see."

XIX.

“ Let this hint suffice—

The Cross once seen is death to every vice ;
Else He that hung there suffer'd all this pain,
Bled, groan'd, and agonised, and died, in vain.”

KING ALFRED, after his conversion, used to spend night after night in a quiet retreat, poring over the Book of Psalms, and, like Luther, crying, “ More light! more light!” In a secluded villa near Milan was now to be seen, for many successive weeks, the meek son of Monica, sitting, like another Mary, often for half the night, at the feet of Jesus, hearing His words. “ Oh! in what accents,” says he, “ spake I unto Thee, my God, when I read the Psalms of David, those faithful songs and sounds of devotion! How was I—as yet a novice in Thy real love—by them kindled towards Thee, and on fire to rehearse them, if

possible, through the whole world against the pride of mankind !”

But we return, for a few moments, to the garden.

His first impulse, that night, was, to “tell his friend Alypius what had come to him ;” and so, “putting his finger between and also some other mark,” he closed the book, and, “with a calm countenance,” communicated the joyful tidings.

“Let me see,” said Alypius, “what you have read.” Opening the place he shewed him ; and the words following caught his eye, “Him that is weak in the faith, receive.” “This,” says Augustine, “he applied to himself, and disclosed to me. And by this admonition was he strengthened ; and by a good resolution and purpose, and most corresponding to his character, wherein he did always very far differ from me for the better, he without any turbulent delay joined me.”

His next thought was, to hasten to Monica ; and to her he “related in order how it had taken place.” Long had she “gone forth weeping, bearing the precious seed ;” and now

it was like life's harvest-home to her, with its "sheaves" of joy. "She leapt for gladness," Augustine writes, "and triumphed, and blessed God who had done for her above what she could ask or think. She perceived that Thou hadst given her more for me, than she was wont to beg by her pitiful and most sorrowful groanings. For Thou convertedst me unto Thyself, so that I sought neither wife, nor any hope of this world, standing in that 'rule' of faith where Thou hadst shewed me unto her in a vision so many years before. And Thou didst 'convert her mourning into joy' much more plentiful than she had desired, and in a much more precious and purer way than she erst required by having grandchildren of my body."

Vinet speaks of a detaching and an attaching. Nature begins with the detaching; hence its painful struggles after holiness, and its dark and dreary bondage. Grace attaches first—attaches to the person of the living and loving Saviour; and, a new affection thus possessing the soul, the detaching follows easily, naturally. "I saw with my heart the Lord Jesus," said an

Indian warrior to Brainerd, one day; "and it stole my heart away." Augustine had now felt the expulsive power of the same new affection; and, like Levi at the receipt of custom, he had resolved to leave all and follow Jesus.*

It was within some twenty days of the "Vacation of the Vintage;" and, determining, "not tumultuously to tear, but gently to withdraw, the service of his tongue from the marts of lip-labour,"—he "endured" these few days, that, having been "purchased of the Lord, no more to return for sale," he might "then in a regular way take his leave."

Not, indeed, without certain grave misgivings, did his tender conscience suffer him to "sit even one hour in the chair of lies." "Thou hadst pierced our hearts," he writes,

* Possidius, referring to this period, says:—"Mox ex intimis cordis medullis conversus ad Deum, spem omnem, quam habebat in sæculo, dereliquit; jam non uxorem, non filios carnis, non divitias, non honores, sæculi quærens; sed Deo cum suis servire statuit, in illo et ex illo pusillo grege esse studens, quem Dominus alloquitur, dicens, 'Nolito timere, pusille grex, quoniam complacuit Patri vestro dare vobis regnum. Vendite quæ possidetis,' &c.—et super fidei fundamentum ædificare desiderans non ligna, fœnum et stipulam, sed aurum, argentum, et lapides pretiosos."

“with Thy charity, and we carried Thy words as it were fixed in our entrails; and the examples of Thy servants—whom for black thou hadst made bright, and for dead, alive—being piled together in the receptacle of our thoughts, kindled and burnt up that our heavy torpor, that we should not sink down to the abyss; and they fired us so vehemently that all the blasts of ‘subtle tongues’ from gainsayers might only inflame us the more fiercely, not extinguish us.”

Nevertheless, he decided to wait. “It seemed,” he adds, “like ostentation, not to wait for the vacation now so near, but to quit beforehand a public profession which was before the eyes of all,—so that all, looking on this act of mine, and observing how near was the time of vintage which I wished to anticipate, would talk much of me, as if I had desired to appear some great one. And what end had it served me, that people should repute and dispute upon my purpose, and that our ‘good should be evil spoken of?’ ”

Meanwhile, the brief interval had its own “full joy.” “Submitting his neck to Chrst’s

easy yoke, and his shoulders to His light burden,"—he writes:—"How sweet did it at once become to me to want the sweetnesses of those toys! and what I had feared to be parted from, was now a joy to part with. For Thou, O Christ Jesus, didst cast them forth from Thee, Thou true and highest sweetness! Thou castedst them forth, and, instead of them, enteredst in Thyself—sweeter than all pleasure, though not to flesh and blood—brighter than all light, but more hidden than all depths—higher than all honor, but not to the high in their own conceits. Now was my soul free from the biting cares of canvassing and getting, and from weltering in filth, and scratching off the itch of lust. And my infant tongue spake freely to Thee my brightness, and my riches, and my health, the Lord my God.

Another thing solaced him. That very summer, his "lungs had begun to give way, amid too great literary labour, and to breathe deeply with difficulty, and, by a pain in the chest, to shew that they were injured, and to refuse any full or lengthened speaking;" and he had been looking forward to the necessity of "laying

down that burden of teaching," or, if he "could be cured and recover," at least of intermitting it. "But," says he, "when the full wish for leisure, that I might see 'how that thou art the Lord,'* arose, and was fixed, in me,—my God, Thou knowest, I began even to rejoice that I had this secondary, and that no feigned excuse, which might something moderate the offence taken by those who, for their sons' sake, wished me never to have the freedom of Thy sons."

Thus the twenty days were "endured manfully." "Our purpose," says he, "was known to Thee; but to men, other than our own friends, was it not known. For we had agreed among ourselves not to let it abroad to any; although to us, now ascending from the 'valley of tears' and singing that 'song of degrees,' Thou hadst given 'sharp arrows' and 'destroying coals' against the 'subtle tongue' which, as though advising for us, would thwart, and would, out of love, devour us, as it doth its meat." Moreover, the "covetousness, which aforetime bore a part of this heavy business," had left him, and he "remained alone;" but "patience had

* Psalm xlv. 10.

taken its place," and so he "was not overwhelmed."

At length, the day arrived when he "was indeed freed of his Rhetoric Professorship, whereof in thought he had been already freed,"—the Lord "rescuing his tongue whence He had before rescued his heart." And he retired to a friend's country house, "blessing God and rejoicing." With him was the "brother of his heart," Alypius, who had been "subdued unto the name of Jesus;" and the boy Adeodatus—born, after the flesh, of his sin—a lad not quite fifteen, but "in wit surpassing many grave and learned men;" and, last not least, was Monica, "in female garb with masculine faith, with the tranquility of age, motherly love, Christian piety."

The host himself was not of the circle; for, with not a few convictions, poor Verecundus "would not be a christian on any other terms than on those he could not." Himself "held long back by bonds whereby he was most sternly bound, he was worn down with care about their blessedness; for he saw that he should be severed from them." But he "offered them

courteously the use of his villa ;” and, scarcely able to bear the separation, he set out on a visit to Rome. During his sojourn there, he was taken seriously ill ; the arrow was removed by the Divine Healer ; and, not long afterwards, he died, resting in Christ Jesus. “In this,” says Augustine, “Thou hadst mercy, not on him only, but on us also,—lest, remembering the exceeding kindness of our friend towards us yet unable to number him among Thy flock, we should be agonized with intolerable sorrow. Thanks unto Thee, our God, we are Thine ! Thy suggestions and consolations tell us, that, faithful in promises, Thou now requitest Verecundus for his country-house of Cassiacum, where, from the fever of the world, we now reposed in Thee with the eternal freshness of Thy Paradise.”

The villa was Augustine’s Wartburg, where the Lord took him aside

“To gather up the ravelled skeins of feeling—
And rest a while for duties.”

“When shall I have time to rehearse,” he writes, “all Thy great benefits towards us at

that time, especially when hasting on to yet greater mercies? For my remembrance recalls me—and pleasant it is to me, O Lord, to confess to Thee—by what inward goads Thou tamedst me: and how Thou hast evened me, lowering the mountains and hills of my high imaginations, straightening my crookedness, and smoothing my rough ways.”

And he adds:—“With what vehement and bitter sorrow was I angered at the Manichees! How I would they had then been somewhere near me, and, without my knowing that they were there, could have beheld my countenance and heard my words when I read the fourth Psalm in that time of my rest, and how that Psalm wrought upon me—‘Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness; Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer!’ Would that what I uttered on these words they could hear, without my knowing whether they heard, lest they should think I spake it for their sakes! Because neither should I speak the same things, nor in the same way, if I perceived that they heard and saw me; nor, if I spake them, would

they so receive them as when I spake by and for myself before Thee, out of the natural feelings of my soul."

Another divine lesson taught him, "in that breathing-time, panting from the school of pride," was—a deep self-abasement and a holy revenge against sin. "How was I moved, O my God," says he, "who had now learned to be angry at myself for sins past, that I might not sin in time to come! Yea, to be justly angry; for it was not another nature of a people of darkness which sinned for me, as they say who are not angry at themselves and who treasure up wrath against the day of wrath and of the revelation of Thy just judgment. Nor were my good things now without, nor sought with the eyes of flesh in that earthly sun; for they that would have joy from without soon become vain, and waste themselves on the things seen and temporal, and in their famished thoughts do lick their very shadows. There, where I was angry within myself in my chamber—where I was inwardly pricked—where I was sacrificed, slaying 'my old man' and commencing the purpose of a new life, 'putting

my trust in Thee,'—there hadst Thou begun to grow sweet unto me, and hadst 'put gladness in my heart.' And I cried out, as I read this outwardly, finding it inwardly. Nor would I be multiplied with worldly goods—wasting away time, and wasted away by time; whereas I had, in Thy eternal simple essence, other 'corn, and wine, and oil.'"

It has been remarked of Bunyan that his perceptions were all so vivid as to be transfigured into sensations. Augustine's trials and triumphs of faith took the same almost tangible form. "I trembled for fear," he writes, giving another of his villa-experiences, "and again kindled with hope, and with rejoicing in Thy mercy, O Father; and all issued forth, both by mine eyes and by my voice, when Thy good Spirit, turning unto us, said, 'O ye sons of men! how long slow of heart? why do ye love vanity and seek after leasing?' For I had loved vanity, and had sought after leasing. Thy Holy One was risen, and was ascended; and the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, was come, and was crying. 'Know this!' and I so long, not knowing, had 'loved vanity and

sought after leasing :’ and therefore I heard and trembled, because it was spoken unto such as I remembered myself to have been. For, in those phantoms which I had held for truths, was there ‘vanity and leasing ;’ and I spake aloud many things, earnestly and forcibly, in the bitterness of my remembrance. Which would they had heard, who yet ‘love vanity and seek after leasing!’ They would perchance have been troubled, and have vomited it up ; and ‘Thou wouldest hear them when they cried unto Thee.’”

On a later occasion, after the same Bunyan-like type, he says :—“I read that verse—‘I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep ; for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety ;’ and, with a loud cry of my heart, I cried out, O ‘in peace!’ O for the self-same ! O, what said he, ‘I will lay me down and sleep?’ I read, and kindled ; nor found I what to do to those deaf and dead—of whom myself had been—a pestilent person, a bitter and a blind bawler against those writings which are honied with the honey of heaven, and lightsome with

Thine own light: and I was consumed with zeal at the enemies of this Scripture."

Some days passed, and he had a notable instance of "the severity of the Lord's scourge, as well as of the wonderful swiftness of His mercy." He writes:—"Thou didst then torment me with pain in my teeth; which when it had come to such height that I could not speak, it came into my heart to desire all my friends present to pray for me to Thee, the God of all manner of health. And this I wrote on wax, and gave it them to read. Presently, so soon as with humble devotion we had bowed our knees, that pain went away. But what pain? or how went it away? I was affrighted, O my Lord, my God; for, from infancy, I had never experienced the like. And the power of Thy nod was deeply conveyed to me; and, rejoicing in faith, I praised Thy name."

It was now term-time, after the "vintage-vacation;" and he gave formal notice to the Milanese to "provide their scholars with another master to sell words to them;" "for," says he, "I both had made choice to serve

Thee, and, through my difficulty of breathing and pain in my chest, was not equal to my professorship." At the same time, he forwarded a letter to Ambrose, setting forth his "past errors and present desires, and especially his wish "to put on Christ" openly by baptism. The holy man responded with a characteristic warmth of welcome; and, in a few more weeks, Aurelius was openly to confess his Lord, crying—

"Oh! let me still

Write Thee Great God, and me Thy child;

Let me be soft and supple to Thy will;

Small to myself, to others mild;

Be hither ill!"

XX.

“ Let him see thee speaking to thy God ; he will not forget it
afterward :

When old and gray, will he feelingly remember a mother’s
tender piety.”

“ Now the evening shadows lengthen,
And the stars will soon appear ;
Every fleeting moment tells me,
That the hour of rest is near.”

A YEAR or two previous, strange scenes had been witnessed in the city cathedral. The empress mother—a recent pervert to Arianism—had lent herself to the heretics as a violent persecutor. On Ambrose, especially, the vials of her fury were poured. And, day after day, the devout people had kept watch in the church, expecting to see their pastor taken forth to martyrdom—themselves “ready to die with him.” Among the waiting company was Monica, “bearing a chief part of these anxieties, living for prayer.”

In those days, her son and his associates had not yet been “warmed by the heat of God’s Spirit;” but often had they been stirred by the sight of the “amazed and disquieted city,” and, not least, by the calm joy with which, in the church and in the houses, and even on the streets, the people would sing hymns and psalms—a custom then first instituted, after the manner of the Eastern Churches—“lest they should wax faint through the tediousness of sorrow.” And now that he returned to Milan to confess Christ, he fell with his whole soul into “this kind of consolation and exhortation, zealously joining with harmony of voice and heart.” “How did I weep,” says he, “in thy hymns and canticles, touched to the quick by the voices of Thy sweet-strained Church! The voices flowed into mine ear, and the truth distilled into my heart, whence the affections of my devotion overflowed, and tears ran down, and happy was I therein. Nor was I sated with the wondrous sweetness of considering the depth of Thy counsels concerning the salvation of mankind. Therefore did I the more weep among the singing of Thy hymns, former-

ly sighing after Thee, and at length breathing in Thee, as far as the breath may enter into this house of grass."

Augustine's affectionate soul — dissevered from old fellowships—soon drew around it holy attachments. The circle at Milan was a little brotherhood of hearts,—

"Its sun the brightness of affection."

There was Alypius, whom we left in the garden beneath the tree. "He, with me," says Augustine, "was born again in Thee." Already "clothed was he with a most meek humility." And "a most valiant tamer was he of the body."

Then there was Euodius, "a young military officer of his own city," who, amidst the gaities of the Imperial Court, had been arrested by God's grace, and, quitting his "secular warfare," had "girded himself for the Lord's."

And there was the youth Adeodatus, whose talent struck his father with "such awe," that he "could only exclaim, 'Who but Thou could be the workmaster of such wonders?'" "Soon," he adds, "didst Thou take his life

from the earth; and I now remember him without anxiety, fearing nothing for his childhood or youth or his whole self."

There was Nebridius, also, who, though he had fallen into "the pit of that pernicious error of believing the flesh of God's Son to be a phantom," yet, "emerging thence," had given himself to God at the fountain of Immanuel's blood. He, too, ere long, was ripened for glory. His whole family had just been, "through him, made Christian,"—when he was "released from the flesh;" "and now," writes his friend, "he lives in Abraham's bosom. Whatever that be which is signified by that bosom, there lives my Nebridius, my sweet friend, and Thy child, O Lord, adopted of a freedman; there he liveth. For what other place is there," he adds, "for such a soul? There he liveth, whereof he asked much of me, a poor inexperienced man. Now lays he not his ear to my mouth, but his spiritual mouth unto Thy fountain, and drinketh as much as he can receive, wisdom in proportion to his thirst, endlessly happy. Nor do I think that he is so inebriated therewith, as to forget

me; seeing Thou, Lord, whom he drinketh, art mindful of us."

And, last not least, there was Monica, whose hand had dropped into his heart's deepest furrows the goodly seed of the kingdom.

Such was the little family whom grace had called, at once into the fellowship of Jesus and into the mutual fellowship of most loving and unselfish hearts. They "were together, about to dwell together for some devout purpose, seeking where they might serve Thee most usefully," when a stroke came upon Aurelius, which, more than any other, made him feel as if he were himself more than half way.

The friends had set out for Africa, and were already as far as Ostia, "recruiting, after the fatigues of a long journey, for the voyage." One evening, "leaning in a certain window which looked into the garden," Augustine and his mother stood alone, and, "removed from the din of men," were "discoursing together very sweetly." "Forgetting," says he, "those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, we were enquiring between ourselves, in the presence

of the 'Truth—which Thou art—of what sort the eternal life of the saints was to be, 'which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man.' Gasping with the mouth of our heart after these heavenly streams of God's fountain—the fountain of life which is with Him, so that, being bedewed thence, according to our capacity, we might in some sort meditate upon so high a mystery,—we were, in our discourse, brought to that point, that the very highest delight of the earthly senses, in the very purest material light, seemed in respect of the sweetness of that life, not only not worthy of comparison, but not even of mention."

It looked, that evening, as if the saintly Monica were already breathing the air of heaven. "We, raising up ourselves," he says again, "with a most glowing affection, did by degrees pass through all things bodily, even the very firmament whence sun and moon and stars shine upon the earth; yea, we were soaring higher yet, by inward musing, and discourse, and admiring of Thy words; and we came to our own minds, and went beyond

them, that we might arrive at that region of never-failing plenty where 'Thou feedest Israel' for ever with the food of truth. And, while we were discoursing and panting after wisdom, we slightly touched on it with the whole effort of our heart; and we sighed, and there we leave bound 'the first fruits of the Spirit,' and returned to vocal expression of our mouth, where the word spoken has beginning and end."

Before many days, Monica was to be away; and it seemed as if even now she was treading "the golden streets" and had "joined the glorious throng." "We were saying then," her son writes, "If to any the tumult of the flesh were hushed—hushed the images of earth and waters and air—hushed also the poles of heaven—yea, the very soul hushed to herself, and, by not thinking on self, did surmount self—hushed all dreams and imaginary revelations, every tongue and every sign, and whatsoever exists only in transition (since, if any could hear, all these say, 'We made not ourselves, but He made us that abideth for ever')—If then, having uttered this, they too should

be hushed, having roused only our ears to Him who made them, and He alone should speak, not by them, but by Himself, that we might hear His word, not through any tongue of flesh, nor angel's voice, nor sound of thunder, nor in the dark riddle of a similitude, but might hear whom in these things we love—might hear his very self without these (as we two now strained ourselves, and in swift thought touched on that Eternal Wisdom which abideth over all),—could this be continued on, and other visions of kind far unlike be withdrawn, and this one ravish and absorb and wrap up its beholder amid these inward joys, so that life might be for ever like that one moment of understanding which now we sighed after;—were not this, ‘Enter into Thy Master’s joy’? And when shall that be?”

Monica was not ill that night; and yet a strange presentiment had seized her, that her translation could not be very far off. “Son,” she said solemnly, as the setting sun shed, with a quiet radiance, his last golden beams into the humble chamber, “for mine own part, I have no farther delight in anything in this

life. What I do here any longer, and to what end I am here, I know not,—now that my hopes in this world are accomplished. One thing there was, for which I desired to linger for a while in this life, that I might see thee a Catholic Christian before I died. My God hath done this for me more abundantly, that I should now see thee withal, despising earthly happiness, become His servant: What, then, do I here?" They parted for the night,—Monica, especially,

“Yearning for realms where fancy shall be fill’d and the
ecstasies of freedom shall be felt,
And the soul reign gloriously, risen to its royal destinies.”

A day or two afterwards, she suddenly “fell sick of a fever.” One night, “a swoon came on, so severe that for a good while she was withdrawn from these visible things.” Augustine and his friends had hastened round her; and, as she looked up again and saw them standing by, she enquired, “Where was I?”

That night, there was a little episode on which afterwards Aurelius greatly loved to linger. Fixing her eye steadfastly on her son,

who stood "with grief amazed," she said, "Here shall you bury your mother." Till lately, the place of her burial had engaged her anxious thoughts. One day, at Thegaste, as her son was leaving, she had taken him to the cemetery, and, pointing to a spot beside his father, had said to him—"We have lived in great harmony together; and, when I die, I wish what is earthly of us to be united beneath the same earth." And, since the travellers had set out from Milan on their way home, she had more than once expressed her desire "to have it remembered among men," that, "after her pilgrimage beyond the seas," the dust of each was not divided. But, latterly, the longing had, "through the fulness of the Lord's goodness," "begun to cease in her heart." "In that discourse in the window," Aurelius writes, "when she said, 'What do I here any longer?' there appeared no desire of dying in her own country. And, another day, in my absence, as she was, with a mother's confidence, discoursing with some friends about the contempt of this life and the blessing of death, and they had expressed their amazement that

such courage God should have given to a woman, adding, ‘Are you not afraid to leave your body so far from your own city?’ she replied, ‘Nothing is far to God; nor do I fear lest at the resurrection He should not recognise whence He were to raise me up.’” And now, as the weeping circle stood around her bed, and as she whispered that injunction about her burial, Augustine “held his peace, and refrained weeping,” silently adoring Him who had “instilled that gift into the heart of His faithful one.”

“But,” said his friend, addressing the dying saint, “I pray God to grant you a happier lot than to die in this strange place.” “What!” she replied, fixing upon him an anxious look, and as if checking him with her eyes, “still savouring such things?” And then, turning to her son, she added, “Behold what he saith!” A few moments passed; and, once more reverting to the topic, she addressed them both thus—“Lay this body anywhere; let not the care for that any way disquiet you.” And again she “held her peace, being exercised by her growing sickness.”

About the eighth day, the "dark cottage" was evidently crumbling to its fall. That night, as the shadows of the dark valley fell upon her, she spoke to all about her with a heavenly calmness.

"The terrors were but shadows now, haunting the vale of death:

The dread was drown'd with joy, the hope was fill'd with immortality."

At last, towards sunrise on the ninth day, "that religious and holy soul was freed from the body," and winged its way to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense, till a better day should break and a brighter sun arise. It was thirty summers after she had "brought forth in the flesh into this temporal light" him who, after the travail of so many prayers, she had "brought forth in heart into the light eternal."

As the happy spirit fled, Augustine closed her eyes; and "there flowed withal a mighty sorrow into his heart, which was overflowing into tears,"—his eyes, at the same time, by the violent command of his mind, "drinking up

their fountain wholly dry." The boy Adeodatus "burst out into a loud lament;" then, checked by them all, he held his peace. "In like manner also," says Augustine, "a childish feeling in me, which was, through my heart's youthful voice, finding its vent in weeping, was checked and silenced. For," he adds, "we thought it not fitting to solemnise *that* funeral with tearful lament and groanings, because thereby do they for the most part express grief for the departed, as though unhappy or altogether dead, whereas she was neither unhappy in her death, nor altogether dead. Of this we were assured on good grounds—the testimony of her good conversation and of her faith unfeigned."

Meanwhile, "they, whose office it was, made ready for the burial;" but first, Euodius, taking up the Psalter, began to sing the plaintive ditty—the whole little circle answering him—"I will sing of mercy and of judgment; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing."* The melody brought together "many brethren and religious women; and, as they sang, it seemed as

* Ps. ci.

if they had followed the glorified spirit aloft, and were already sweeping, on the sea of glass, their golden harps. The preparation proceeded; and I," says he, "(in a part of the house where I might properly) together with those who thought not fit to leave me, discoursed upon something fitting the time, and, by the balm of truth, assuaged the torment known to Thee, they unknowing and listening intently, and conceiving me to be without all sense of sorrow."

Never was filial heart so wrung. "Woe was me in such a strife," he wrote, long afterwards, recording those hours. "What was it which did grievously pain me within, but a fresh wound wrought through the sudden wrench of that most sweet and dear custom of living together? I joyed, indeed, in her testimony, when, in that her last sickness, mingling her endearments with my acts of duty, she called me 'dutiful,' and mentioned with great affection and love, that she never had heard any harsh or reproachful sound uttered by my mouth against her. But yet, O my God, who madest us, what comparison is there betwixt

that honour which I paid her, and her slavery for me? Being, then, forsaken of so great comfort in her, my soul was wounded, and that life rent asunder, as it were, which, of hers and mine together, had been made but one."

No wonder, then, that that manly face did, that day, scarce conceal, before the little circle, the inner harrowing of the stricken heart. "In Thy ears," says he, "where none of them heard, I blamed the weakness of my feelings, and refrained my flood of grief, which gave way a little unto me, but again came, as with a tide, yet not so as to burst out into tears nor to a change of countenance; still I knew what I was keeping down in my heart. And, being very much displeased that these human things had such power over me, which in the due order and appointment of our nature, must needs come to pass,—with a new grief I grieved for my grief, and was thus worn by a double sorrow."

That evening, "the corpse was carried to the burial," the mourners "going and returning without tears." "Yet," says he, "I was in secret heavily sad, and, with troubled mind,

prayed Thee, as I could, to heal my sorrow ; but Thou didst not." On their return, he "went and bathed," having heard that the bath had its name from its "driving sadness from the mind ;" but no relief came—he was "the same as before he had bathed," for "the bitterness of sorrow could not exude out of his heart." Then, going to rest, he "slept, and woke again," his "grief not a little softened ;" and, as he was alone in his bed, he remembered those "true verses of Ambrose"—

" Maker of all, the Lord,
And ruler of the height ;
Who, robing day in light hath pour'd
Soft slumbers o'er the night ;

That to our limbs the power
Of toil may be renew'd,
And hearts be raised that sink and cower,
And sorrow be subdued."

By and by, as the stunning grief wore off, "I recovered," says he, "by little and little, my former thoughts of Thy handmaid—her holy conversation towards Thee, her holy tenderness and observance towards us, whereof I was suddenly deprived ; and I was minded to

weep, in Thy sight, for them and for myself, in her behalf and in my own. And I gave way to the tears which I before restrained, to overflow as much as they desired; reposing my heart upon them: and it found rest in them, for it was in Thy ears, not in those of man who would have scornfully interpreted my weeping."

"And now, Lord," he adds, "in writing I confess it unto Thee: read it who will, and interpret it how he will: and, if he finds sin therein, that I wept for my mother for a small portion of an hour—the mother who for the time was dead to mine eyes, who had for many years wept for me that I might live in Thine eyes,—let him not deride me, but rather, if he be one of large charity, let him weep himself for my sins unto Thee, the Father of all the brethren of Thy Christ."

It was late in the autumn of 387, and in Monica's fifty-sixth year.

XXI.

“Thy will such an entrenching is,
As passeth thought !
To it, all strength, all subtleties
Are things of nought.”

ON the road from Ostia, there was seen traveling, one day, a little company of sable mourners—weighed down, like the two friends going to Emmaus, by some mysterious grief. And yet—like their prototypes—as they “walked and were sad,” a gleam of sunshine would shoot athwart their faces, as if within them their hearts “burned.” It was Augustine—bereaved and stricken, yet brightened by a most blessed hope—on his way for a little season to Rome, before resuming his journey homeward.

Augustine at Rome ! the future Doctor—the meek, childlike disciple,

“ Within the ancient city ! his feet
Standing within the ruin'd theatre,
Where gladiators fought, and Christians bled !
The past seem'd present,
And slaughter'd martyrs rose to live and speak ! ”

Ah ! even already there was little else there than the past, with which a soul so simple in its faith, so warm in its Christ-affection, could have fellowship. Augustine's Rome was the Rome of St. Paul, not that of Hildebrand and of Borgia. The great Church-father was a living soul ; and what communion has the living with the dead ?

Late in the summer, he once more set out for Africa. Landing at Carthage, he sojourned for some days with a friend who, like himself, since they last met, had found Christ, and, “ in answer to prayer,” had just been raised up from the gates of the grave. Then, repairing to his native town—where he had a small estate, left him by his father,—he found a retreat such as his soul coveted, after its recent tossings. He was joined by a few brethren ; and with them he freely shared his patrimony,—dedicating the next three years to study and to

prayer. As from the desert with its secret trials and triumphs of faith—not from scenes of fleshly excitement—the Master had gone forth to His ministry,—so the disciple was to go forth on his errand, not from the dreams of the Academic grove—still less from the world's enticing blandishments, but from the quiet solitude with its stern lessons and its searching heavenly discipline.

“Where is the wise, or the learn'd, or the good, that
sought not solitude for thinking,
And from seclusion's secret vale brought forth his
precious fruits?”

After his own quaint fashion, he gives us sundry glimpses into the retreat.

Luther tells us he learned his theology upon his knees. If Augustine had already learned on his knees the theology of conversion, he was now to learn, in a like method, the theology of the inner life. That “warring” especially of the two “laws”—that “lusting of the flesh against the spirit,”—which constrained the convert of Tarsus to exclaim, with such intenseness of emotion, “O wretched man

that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" was now to find a battlefield in the heart of Augustine. And he, like Paul, was to find, in the unchanging Saviour, the same victory and the same repose.

And not idly did he afterwards "recount" them. "These confessions," says he, "praise the God of righteousness and goodness, and excite the human understanding and affection toward Him. They did this in me while I was writing them; and they do it still when I read them."

One morning, after a night of deep exercise, he poured out his heart thus:—"My groaning is witness that I am displeased with myself; but Thou shinest out, and art pleasing, and beloved, and longed for,—that still more I may be ashamed of myself and renounce myself, and may choose Thee, and please neither Thee nor myself but in Thee."

And again:—"How near, by Thy gift, I approach unto Thee! and how much I am held back by my own weight! My good deeds are Thine appointments and Thy gifts; my evil ones are my offences and Thy judgments. Let

my brethren breathe freely at the one, sigh at the other; and let hymns and weeping go up into Thy sight out of their hearts, which are Thy censers."

Another day, he says:—"Not with doubting, but with assured confidence, do I love Thee, the Lord! Thou has stricken my heart with Thy word, and I love Thee. But what do I love, when I love Thee? Not beauty of bodies; nor the fair harmony of time; nor the brightness of the light—so gladsome to our eyes; nor sweet melodies of varied songs; nor the fragrant smell of flowers, and ointments, and spices; not manna and honey; not limbs acceptable to embracements of flesh. · None of these I love, when I love my God; and yet I love a kind of light, and melody, and fragrance, and meat, and embracement, when I love my God who is the light, melody, fragrance, meat, embracement, of my inner man,—where there shineth unto my soul what space cannot contain, and there soundeth what time beareth not away, and there smelleth what breathing disperseth not, and there tasteth what eating diminisheth not, and there clingeth what satiety

divorceth not. This is it which I love, when I love my God.”*

Each new week seemed to brighten his hope—freshen his penitence—deepen his love. “Give me, dear God,” we find him praying on one occasion, “heartly repentance, an humble and contrite spirit! Make my eyes a fountain of tears, and my hands liberal dispensers of alms, and unwearied instruments of good works! Thou art my King; reign absolute in my heart! Subdue and expel thence all rebellious passions! Quench all the impure burnings of fleshly lusts! and kindle in it the bright fire of Thy love!”

And, on another occasion, thus:—“Sweetest, kindest, dearest Lord! most mighty King of glory, who hast ascended with great triumph unto Thy kingdom in heaven, and sittest enthroned at the right hand of the Father! draw me up to Thee, that, by Thy powerful guidance and more than magnetic force, I may run

* He is here alluding to that poor vapoury *p-antheism*, which, under the guise of an universal theophany, converting every being and every plant and every passing breeze into a manifestation of God, really exiled God into the unapproachable remoteness of an unsubstantial shadow.

after the odour of Thy ointments and not faint! Draw this thirsty soul to the rivers of eternal pleasure—to the fountain of living water, that I may drink my fill, and live for ever, O God of my life!”

His simple, childlike faith fixed its eye less and less upon inward frames, and still more and more upon the outward Christ. “My soul,” said he, one day, to a friend who was enquiring earnestly the way of peace, “is rooted and grounded in the hope of glory, past the power of being shaken with any melancholy misgivings. And the foundations which bear me up in this firmness of mind are three: First, I consider the greatness of God’s love, expressed in my adoption; secondly, the truth of God, which hath promised this blessedness; and, thirdly, the power of God to make good to the uttermost whatever He hath promised. No want of desert on my part, not even the lowest and most mortifying thoughts of my vileness and unworthiness, nor the highest and most enlarged notions of the excellence of the bliss in heaven, can cast me down from this high tower of hope.

And, one evening, alone, he gave form to his longings thus:—"My mind entirely dedicates itself to Thee—gasps and pants after Thee—and covets no other bliss than the sight of her Beloved. I taste no other pleasure but that which results from speaking, hearing, writing, conferring, and perpetually dwelling upon the meditation of Thee and Thy glory. And how sweet the refreshment and the inward calm which these sweet remembrances give me in the midst of a tempestuous world!"

And, another night:—"I love Thee, O my Lord, and desire to love Thee every day more fervently; for Thou art beautiful and amiable above the sons of men, and deservest an affection equal to Thine own adorable and incomprehensible excellency. Oh, let that fire descend into my heart, which burns with a bright and holy flame never languishing, never to be quenched! May every part of me feel the kindly heat! May it expand itself and burn up every other passion, that, all the dross of vain and polluted passions and desires being entirely consumed, I may be turned all into love, and know no other object of that love

but Thee alone, my dearest, sweetest, and most lovely Saviour!

A holy man once indited his soul's yearnings after God, thus:—

“Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart!

Such a Joy, as none can move;

Such a Love, as none can part;

Such a Heart, as joys in love.”

Augustine was now yearning after a like fullness of joy and of love. “O how happy will my soul be,” was his breathing, one day, “when it shall be admitted to see Thy glory! For oh, how great is Thy goodness, and how great is Thy beauty! and how transporting are those secret pleasures which overflow the hearts of Thy beloved who love and seek and desire to know nothing but Thee! Happy are they who have no other hope! happy, whose constant employment is praying to, and conversing with, Thee! happy, whose solitude is spent in awful silence, and in heavenly raptures, and in constant watchfulness over themselves! happy, who, even while in this frail body, anticipate, so far as their condition will allow, the ineffable sweetness of their future glories!”

XXII.

“ When first Thy sweet and gracious eye
Vouchsafed, even in the midst of youth and night,
To look upon me, who, before, did lie

Weltering in sin ;

I felt a sugar'd strange delight,
Passing all cordials made by any art,
Bedew, embalm, and overrun my heart,
And take it in.”

A GREAT Church-doctor uttered, on his death-bed, these parting words:—“ Oh that all my brethren may know what a Master I have served, and what peace I have this day! I shall live and adore Him: glory, glory to my Creator and to my Redeemer for ever! Oh for arms to embrace Him!” Augustine, also, was learning, in these months, the same secret of all life and of all power—a deep personal attachment to his Lord. “ Grant, I beseech Thee,” we find him whispering in His ear, one day, “ that my mouth may ever be full of Thy praise, and my heart overflow with Thy love.

Oh that it might please my sweetest, dearest Jesus to fill my heart with such a love of Him as never can be quenched! to be ever present in my mind, that I may be all over love, and burn with perpetual desires of His company and enjoyment!"

Vinet once remarked—"This single word, this single object, the CROSS, may suffice to make Christians; and, without it, nothing suffices." And he added—"True reformers have at all times carried back the view of the Church towards this centre; and every Church, by looking back towards it, has regained the life which it could not find, nor even seek, elsewhere." Augustine, more than any other Church-father, was to fix, for centuries, during a dark era, thousands of longing eyes upon the same grand central object; and, to fit him for the work, God was revealing to him, day by day, fresh glimpses of His glory. "Thou seest, O my soul!" he wrote, on another occasion, "what noble pledges Thou hast of the affection of Thy spouse. When I reflect upon the constant presence and the abundance of His mercies toward me, I am almost tempted

to say, that my salvation is His only business and care. For sure he could not be more tender of my safety, more ready to relieve all my distresses, to comfort all my sorrows, to supply all my wants, to guard me in all my dangers, could He be supposed to overlook the exigencies of all His other creatures and confine His good providence to me alone,—so watchful does He shew Himself over all my affairs—so ever present to, nay, ever preventing, my earliest wishes.”

The name of Christ may be on the lips of the divine, and yet be only an *idea*. The man who is to speak of Him worthily, and, by his words, is to move his fellows, must not only think of Him but love him—must gaze adoringly on His person, and walk confidently in His fellowship. “I am the light,” said Jesus, on one occasion, to the benighted Church-teachers of the day, revealing indirectly the secret of their blindness; “he that *followeth me* shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” Augustine was laying, broad and deep, the foundations of his future work as a divine, thus:—“While my

thoughts are engaged, I feel a new and unusual pleasure, which makes such strong, such delightful impressions as seem to transport me out of myself. Methinks I am in an instant changed, and become quite another creature; and joys come flowing in upon me, more exquisite than I am able to express. My mind is enlarged; my understanding clear and bright; my heart and its affections enlightened and purified; all my desires filled with pleasure; and my soul is perfect rapture and triumph. I am no longer here, methinks, but translated—I know not how nor whither—to some unknown region of bliss; I embrace, as it were, with a most ardent love, some dear object with which I am not yet perfectly acquainted; I hold Him fast, and strive, all I can, never to part with Him more.”

Neander once rebuked the cold utterers of theologic dogmas, by announcing his famous apophthegm—“It is the *heart* which makes the divine.” And, in his last years, the veteran theologue, vindicating the watchword of his earlier days, said—“We need not be ashamed of this maxim: shame rather to those who

were bold enough to ridicule it: they have pronounced sentence on themselves. It was the watchword of all those who have called forth theology from dead forms to the living spirit of God's Word." The great African doctor was now receiving a Divine training which should preserve him effectually from this peril. On another occasion, he wrote:—"It is with a sort of delightful difficulty that I struggle not to let that break from me, which of all things I wish to keep for ever in my arms. For in Him my soul seems to have found the complement and end of all her desires. This thought creates that eager and inexpressible transport of joy, that she seeks nothing — covets nothing — beyond it, but would esteem her happiness complete, could she continue always to be as she now is. What can this delicious object be, that pours in such a torrent of rapturous and uncorrupted pleasure? Is it my beloved? Undoubtedly it can be none but He. 'Tis thus my Lord vouchsafes to visit me. He comes in secret—not to be seen, not to be discerned by any of my senses. He comes to touch me, but not to

shew His face. He comes to put me in mind of Him, but not to let me perfectly understand Him. He comes to me to give me a taste of His sweetness, but not to give me His whole self. However, this is what my condition will admit; and it is an assured foretaste of heaven—an inviolable earnest and token of His marrying me to Himself.”

Luther’s great business, as the preacher and doctor of the Reformation, was with the sinner’s *conscience*; and, to fit him for this work, God was pleased, through the most harrowing experiences, to lead him to the BLOOD, and to keep him there. Before he proclaimed, with a voice of thunder, the great dogma that “justification by faith alone is the article of a standing or of a falling Church,” he had had it graven by God’s own finger upon the fleshly tablet of his blood-sprinkled heart. “My heart,” said he, unfolding the secret spring of his unfaltering energy in setting forth the “virtue” of the sin-cleansing blood, “is governed by one ruling principle—belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the subject of all my meditations, both by day and by night—the

beginning, the middle, and the end of all my thoughts." In like manner, he who for so many years was to be the Church's almost only beacon in the dark night which was at hand, had teachings, such as God only can convey, concerning the same atoning blood. "My conscience," he whispered to a visitor, at the retreat, one day, "is all over satisfaction; the anguish of my past sufferings is quite swallowed up; and not so much as a troublesome remembrance of them is left behind." And how? "By that most holy, that most precious BLOOD which He was content to shed upon the cross for our redemption, He hath hidden my sins in His wounds, and washed my stains in His most precious blood. I armed an angry justice against myself; and it is discharged upon His head: mine is the crime, and His the torture."

Christ is oftentimes divided; at least, in men's minds. One, for example, makes His person everything, to the comparative exclusion of His work,—whilst another magnifies His work to the comparative neglect of His person. Again, one makes the atoning blood

everything, to the exclusion of the vicarious obedience; whilst another overlays the blood by giving an exaggerated place to the obedience. By that teaching of the heart which is so infallible a guide into "all truth," Augustine was learning to assign to each thing its right place. "His piety," he added, on the occasion last noted, alluding to Christ's obedience, "suffices for my want of it; His ready service for my perverseness; His meekness for my untractable temper; His humility for my pride; His patience for my discontent; His kindness for my hard-heartedness; His calmness of soul for my fretfulness and unruly passions; His gentleness for my rage; His universal and unwearied love for my hatred, and revenge, and cruelty."

Vinet, speaking of the power of the cross to sanctify the life, says—"Looking alone can render to action, not that feverish vivacity which our passions will always give it in abundance, but that calm force, that degree, that delicate precision, that beauty, which passion can never give." Augustine, also, before he had thought of its place in a theological

system, was already fixing unconsciously in its fitting place in his own life this great centre-fact. "Let the Lord," said he, another day, "be the grand subject of our study; let Him preside over all our inclinations—be the ultimate aim of all our desires—dwell always in our thoughts—and reign supreme as the governing principle of all our actions. In a word, let us contemplate, and choose, and remember, and reverence Him above all, and make it our business to live to him alone."

And, some weeks afterwards, he recorded his secret breathing thus:—"Let me drink of thy heavenly sweetness, and be so ravished with the taste, as ever after to disrelish the sensual delights of the world, to despise its pleasures, and cheerfully to encounter the afflictions of this present life; and so to fix my heart upon true nobler joys, as always to disdain the empty and transitory shadows which flesh and blood is so foolishly fond of, and so fearful of parting with."

And, again:—"Let me not, I beseech Thee, esteem or delight in anything but Thee; let all which this whole world can give without

Thee, be counted no better than dross and dung. Let me hate most irreconcilably whatever displeases Thee; and, what Thou lovest, let me most eagerly desire and incessantly pursue. Let me feel no satisfaction in any joys without Thee; nor any reluctance in the greatest sufferings for Thee. Let me aim at nothing so much as to do Thee service; nor detest and avoid anything in comparison of sinning against Thee. Let my ears be ever open to the voice of Thy law; and suffer not my 'heart to incline to any evil things,' that I may never comply with 'them that practise wickedness,' nor take shelter in trifling pretences to excuse or indulge myself in doing what I ought not."

These are Thy teachings, O Divine Spirit! And thus thou girdest for life's great battle every servant whom Thou choosest.

"How dear to me, O God, Thy counsels are!
Who may with Thee compare!"

XXIII.

“ Unblamable in word and thought,
A man arises God himself hath taught—
To prove that without Christ all gain is loss—
All hope despair that stands not on His cross.”

AUGUSTINE had now been three years in his happy retreat, when, one day, a letter arrived from Hippo, a city of some note on the coast, urging him to visit the “imperial commissioner,” who had heard of his “philosophic fame,” and who earnestly desired his instructions. After some hesitation, he went,—gathering that it was of the Lord.

On his arrival, he was welcomed by other citizens besides the Roman magistrate. The church of Hippo, after a protracted slumber, had been visited lately with a Divine awakening. Its quickened members had heard of Augustine. And who so fit to speak to them the words of eternal life?

It was by no ordinary discipline that God had trained him to be "one of His ministers." Before quitting his retreat, he had poured out his breathings, thus:—"O Holy Spirit, who proceedest from the Almighty Father and His most blessed Son, descend plentifully into my heart! lighten the dark corners of this neglected dwelling, and scatter there thy cheerful beams! dwell in that soul which longs to be Thy temple! water that barren soil, overgrown with weeds and briers, and make it fruitful with Thy dew from heaven! Heal the lurking distempers of my inward man! strike me through with the dart of Thy love, and kindle holy fires in my breast, such as may flame out in a bright and devout zeal—may actuate and enliven the heavy mass—may burn up all the dross of sensual affections—and, diffusing themselves through every part, may possess and purify and warm my whole spirit and soul and body."

Herbert, describing a model-pastor, says, that "the chief and top of his knowledge consists in the book of books, the storehouse and magazine of life and comfort, the Holy Scriptures. There he sucks and lives." Augustine in these

years had lived upon the Word as his daily bread. "With his attached companions," says Possidius, "he lived to God by fastings, by prayers, and by good deeds, meditating on the law of the Lord day and night." *

And the study had quickened his steps heavenward. "Oh, that life," we find him breathing, one day, "which God hath laid up in store for them that love Him! That life indeed! That happy, secure, serene, and most amiable—that pure and holy—life! That life which fears no death, which feels no sorrow, which knows no sin, which languishes under no pain—is distracted with no care—is ruffled with no passion—lies at the mercy of no accidents! That incorruptible, that unchangeable life, which hath everything that can attract our affections and command our esteem! There, there will be no enemies to assault us, no envy to undermine us, no temptation to seduce us, no fears to confound us; but perfect love and harmony of souls—a day which never declines

* "Cum iis qui eidem adhærebant, Deo vivebat, jejuniis, orationibus, bonisque operibus, in lege Domini meditans die et nocte."

—a light which never goes out. There we shall see God face to face ; and, when we awake up after His likeness, our souls shall be satisfied with it. This let me speak and hear of continually.”

The man in the picture in the Intrepreter's private room had “the world beneath his feet.” Augustine had come forth from his retreat with this “furnishing” of a true pastor. “Lord,” he said, another day, “I bless Thee that Thou grantest me some refreshment, some loose, from the miseries, and toils, and incumbrances of a troublesome, perishing life. Blessed are all Thy saints, my God and King, who have travelled over the tempestuous sea of mortality, and have at last made the desired port of peace and felicity—fearless of future hazards, and full of perpetual joy. This sea, Thou, my Saviour, didst condescend to try and to be tossed upon. Oh, cast a gracious eye upon us who are still in our dangerous voyage ! Thou hast promised to make us immortal with and by Thyself, and to bestow upon us the everlasting felicity of Thy presence : Oh, remem-

ber and succour us in our rough storm of troubles and temptations!"

Many weeks had not passed, when his burning zeal for souls and his valiant defense of the truth drew towards him all eyes and all hearts.

Hippo, in those days, had for its bishop a godly minister, who, having shared in the late awakening, had begun painfully to feel the need of some firmer hand and more watchful eye than his to tend Christ's flock and to stem the rising tide of heresy and of corruption. One morning, in the pulpit, the venerable man, with great simplicity and affection, laid the matter before the people, telling them that they needed another pastor, and that he had been praying to the Master to send them one. With one consent, the congregation named the stranger who had lately come among them. Valerius gave thanks that the Lord had heard his prayers. And Augustine, who was present, was summoned to feed the flock.

Overwhelmed with a sense of the greatness of the work and of his own unfitness for such

a charge, he gave vent to a flood of tears.* “Ah! Lord God!” was his secret thought; “behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child. But, as he pondered, in his closet, that night, on the Divine leadings by which he had been conducted through so many successive mazes to that spot, and as he felt rising within him a fresh yearning over souls, it seemed as if a voice from heaven were whispering to him—“Say not, I am a child; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and, whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak.” A few more months were given, in his old retreat, to special study and to prayer; and, returning to Hippo, he was ordained a presbyter, to the great joy of all.*

* Possidius writes:—“Valerius, episcopus Hipponensis, quum flagitante ecclesiasticâ necessitate de providendo et ordinando presbytero civitati plebem Dei alloqueretur et exhortaretur; jam scientes catholici sancti Augustini propositum et doctrinam, manu injectâ (quoniam et idem in populo securus, et ignarus quid futurum esset, adstabat) eum ergo tenuerunt, et ut in talibus consuetum est, episcopo ordinandum intulerunt, omnibus id uno consensu et desiderio fieri perficique petentibus, magnoque studio et clamore flagitantibus, ubertim eo fiente.”

* Possidius writes again: —“Sanctus vero Valerius, ordi-

It was in the spring of 392, and in his thirty-ninth year.

nator ejus, ut erat vir pius, et Deum timens, exultabat, et Deo gratias agebat suas exauditas a Domino fuisse preces, quas se frequentissimè fudisse narrabat, ut sibi divinitus homo concederetur talis, qui posset verbo Dei et doctrinâ salubri ecclesiam Domini ædificare."

XXIV.

“ Grace makes the slave a freeman.”

“ Behold, what fire is in his eye, what fervour on his cheek !

HERBERT has described the pulpit as the minister’s “joy and throne;” and the characteristic of his “sermon,” he says, is “holiness”—“he is not witty, or learned, or eloquent, but HOLY.”

If ever pastor “approved himself” thus “unto God,” it was Augustine during these years. The good bishop, greatly his inferior in talent, was not ashamed to give to his new associate the commanding place for which both nature and grace had so evidently fitted him. Occupying the pulpit very often in Valerius’ presence—“a thing previously unknown in Africa”—he would plead with souls after a

fashion not a little startling in that Laodicean age.*

“Oh, unspeakable love!” he would say, in some of his fervent appeals; “oh, sweetness of mercy inconceivable! Oh, most amazing condescension! that God, for the sake of man, should be made man—that God for man should die in the flesh—that He should submit to be ‘tempted in all things like as we are, only without sin!’ See at how inestimable a price, see with what difficulty, man was redeemed, who had forfeited and enslaved himself to the devil, and, had he not been ransomed at so vast an expense, must unavoidably have suffered eternal damnation, with that tyrannical master of his own choosing! These things will shew thee, O man, how much thou art bound to love God, and, if He calls thee to it, how patiently, how willingly, nay, with how cheerful and eager a zeal, thou oughtest to endure hardships, and pain, and tortures, for Him who hath en-

* “Et eidem Presbytero,” says Possidius, “potestatem dedit coram se in ecclesiâ Evangelium prædicandi ac frequentissimè tractandi. Unde, accensa et ardens, elevata super candelabrum, lucerna, omnibus qui in domo erant, lucebat.”

dured so much, incomparably greater, for thee !”

“ And, therefore,” he would proceed with deepening emotion, “ let thy soul gladly embrace thy crucified Jesus ; let it drink deep of His most precious blood ; let this most moving theme be thy constant meditation, that thou mayest never for one moment be unmindful of Him that died for thee. Determine from henceforth not to know anything save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, lest other vain mistaken notions should draw thy knowledge off from the firm bottom of saving faith. And, oh ! let this His wonderful love take possession of all the love thou art capable of, lest any rival passion insinuate itself into thy heart, and thou be swallowed up with a torrent of worldly affections.”

Another secret of successful preaching Herbert describes as “ dipping and seasoning all your words and sentences in your heart, before they come into your mouth,—truly affecting and cordially expressing all that you say ; so that the auditors may plainly perceive every word is *heart-deep*.” The preacher of Hippo

had learned the heavenly art of dipping his words heart-deep. "What glowing in my breast is this I feel?" he would say. "What light that darts its rays into my soul? O Fire that art never quenched, kindle my affections! O Sun of righteousness, that never settest—never art clouded, shine in my heart! How sweet is Thy warmth! how secret and pleasant Thy cheerful light! O let me ever be inflamed with Thy Divine, Thy delightful beams! Wretched are they that burn with impure fires: wretched that walk by any other light, and remain destitute of Thine: wretched those blind eyes which do not, wretched those dim eyes which can not, wretched those wilful eyes which wink hard and will not, see the truth! O miserable wretches, who are not sensible of the worth of what they lose! And yet more miserable those hardened souls, which are sensible of their loss and ruin, but nevertheless stumble and fall with eyes broad open, and go down quick into hell!"

The "man in the picture," as he "pleaded with men," had "his eyes lifted up to heaven." Never had preacher been taught more impres-

sively that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." "Too late," he would whisper, in his secret thoughts, before going forth to preach, "I am brought to a due sense and knowledge of Thee. A thick and gloomy cloud hung too long before my blinded eyes, through which I was not able to discern the Sun of righteousness, and light of truth. I was muffled up in darkness—a child of darkness, and did not only endure but love my darkness, because as yet in ignorance of the truth. I was blind and fond of my defect and misery, and every day bewildered more and more in darkness which might even be felt. And what kind Friend was he that took me by the hand to draw me out of this shadow of death? Who so compassionate a guide to this blind wretch,—to seek me when I sought not Him—to call me when I never cried for help, never complained, nay, never felt my calamitous and lost condition? This can be none but Thou, My God, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. No bowels less enlarged than Thine could shew such tender pity and affection."

His one aim, in all his labours, was to “win souls.” And the secret of his deep love to them was the heart-melting experience he had had of the tender affection of the Chief Shepherd. “This,” said he, one day, “is that careful Shepherd, who, when His sheep wandered over steep hills and thorny vales and desolate wildernesses, sought and brought it back with wondrous skill and pains; and, when it was faint and just expiring, sustained and carried it, tied it fast to Himself by the straitest bands of love—lifted it out of the pit of error and confusion—and, with many a kind and tender embrace, rejoiced over it, and fetched the poor, lost, silly creature home to the ‘ninety and nine’ which lay safe in His own fold.”

Cowper, alluding to the futile efforts of those preachers who have not learned to “glory” only “in the Cross,” writes—

“Charm the deaf serpent wisely!
Be most sublimely good, verbosely grand,
And with poetic trappings grace thy prose,
Till it outmouth all the pride of verse.
Ah, tinkling cymbal, and high-sounding brass,
Smitten in vain! Such music cannot charm

The eclipse that intercepts truth's heavenly beam,
And chills and darkens a wide-wandering soul."

Augustine had learned, in his own daily life, to gaze so intently on Christ, and on Christ only, that, in his preaching, all other themes dwindled into nothing. "I have, by my words, poured out before Thee," he wrote, one day indicating the way in which he seemed to feed every moment upon HIM, "sent that WORD in my behalf to Thee, as my glorious intercessor, whom Thou didst erst send down from heaven for my sins: I have paid down the price of that passion which Thy own Son underwent for the release of that debt to Thy justice which my misdeeds had contracted. I believe that Thy Godhead, sent thus into the world, did take upon him my manhood; that in this state He vouchsafed to be bound and buffeted—to be derided and spit upon—to be nailed and pierced and crucified. And this nature of mine, after being wrapt up in swaddling clothes and moistened with infant tears—after the toils of youth, the mortifications of fastings and watchings and long journeys—after being fur-

rowed with scourgings, torn upon the cross, numbered among the dead, and at last honoured with a glorious resurrection,—this nature of mine, I say, Thy Godhead united to it, I most assuredly believe, hath now exalted to the joys of heaven, and seated at the right hand of Thy majesty on high. Remember, then, in much mercy, the quality of Thy Son, and the condition of Thy servant redeemed by Him.”

Such preaching soon began to tell. Paul, alluding to his own ministry, once said—“Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ;” and, on the same occasion, he added—“We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ.” Augustine, also, found that God was with him, blessing His own Word. He *expected* success; and success was given—not always the conversion of souls, but always such a power in the Word as to be “a savour” either of “life” or of “death.”

We have a glimpse into that Hippo-ministry, in a conversation which occurred one day at his table.

“Did you take notice of my sermon to-day in the church,” said he, addressing, in his sim-

ple and homely way, two or three brethren in the ministry who were dining with him, "that its beginning and end were not according to my custom—that I did not finish what I began, but left my subject in suspense?"

"We answered," writes one who was present, "that we were at the time astonished, and now recollected it."

"I believe the reason was," said Augustine, "that the Lord perhaps intended some erroneous person in the congregation, through my forgetfulness and mistake, to be taught and healed; for in His hand are we and our discourses. While I was handling the points of the question proposed, I was led into digression, and so, without concluding or explaining the subject in hand, I terminated the argument rather against Manicheism—on which I had had no design to speak a word—than concerning the matter proposed."

"Next day, or two days after," says the same eye-witness, "came a merchant called Firmus, and, while Augustine was sitting in our presence, threw himself at his feet, shedding tears, and entreating his and our prayers. 'I have

lived,' was his confession, 'many years a Manichee, and have vainly spent many years in the support of that sect; but, through Divine mercy, I have been convinced, by your preaching, of my error; and I now desire to be restored to the Church.' Augustine and we enquired," proceeds the narrator, "by what sermon in particular he had been convinced: he informed us: and, as we all had the occasion fresh in our recollection, we admired and were astonished at the profound counsel of God for the salvation of souls, and we glorified and blessed His holy name, who—when, whence, and as He pleases, by persons knowing and unknowing—works out the salvation of men. From that time, the man, devoting himself to God, gave up his business, and, improving in piety, was by the will of God compelled, against his own will, in another region, to receive the office of presbyter, preserving still the same sanctity."

Augustine was not a ritualist; still less was he a poor, withered "gospeller," content with a dull routine of duty, and with a string of high-sounding phrases. He sought souls: and,

believing that the Word—and the Word only—is “able to save the soul,” he preached it, “in season and out of season.” Over that pulpit in Hippo, if ever over any, might have been written—

“From afar,
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul-quickenings words—BELIEVE, AND LIVE.”

XXV.

“Pitch thy behaviour low ; thy projects high ;
so shalt thou humble and magnanimous be.”

It was after some years of self-denying labour in Hippo, that the holy Valerius, feeling the infirmities of advancing years, and fearing to lose “so great a treasure,” conceived the design of associating the devoted presbyter with himself in the episcopate. The Church, with one voice, seconded the invitation, and urged him with many tears.

At Rome, and elsewhere, the office had begun to be associated with so much of lordly arrogance and of priestly pretension, that it seemed, at first, as if he should never be able to ascend a bishop’s “throne.” But the saintly Valerius had walked so meekly, and had gone in and out among his brethren so unpre-

tendingly and so lovingly, that *his* chair looked more like a place where he might sit on a level with his brother-pastors than a tripod whence to announce oracular commands. And so, after many searchings of heart, he at length accepted the charge; and, in the year three hundred and ninety-five, on Valerius' death, he became sole bishop.

A poet writes—

“Where the meekness of self-knowledge veileth the front
of self-respect,
There look thou for the man whom none can know but
they will honour:
Humility is the softening shadow before the statue of
Excellence,
And lieth lowly on the ground, beloved and lovely as a
violet.”

Such was Augustine in his see. Writing, one day, to a brother in the ministry he said:—
“Above all things, I desire you to ponder, deeply and earnestly, that nothing in this life, and especially at this time—if the thing be gone about perfunctorily and in a spirit of flesh-pleasing—is more easy and delightful, and to men more acceptable, than the function

of a bishop or presbyter or deacon,—but, before God, nothing more wretched and deplorable and ruining: and, on the other hand, believe me, nothing, in this life and especially at this time, if the service be rendered after such a fashion as our Captain approves, is more difficult, more laborious, more perilous, but before God more blessed. How the service is to be rendered, I myself had no instruction, either in boyhood or in youth; and, just when I had begun to learn, I, who did not know how to hold the oar, was constrained by a certain holy violence to assume the second place in the ship,—my only claim being my sins, for any other I could not even guess.”

Preaching was still his ruling passion; and most striking often were the scenes which his earnest zeal occasioned.

One day, he entered the pulpit of Hippo with a heart deeply moved. A vicious custom had gradually grown up in the town, of celebrating solemn days by riotous feasts; and he had come, that morning, bent on an earnest appeal, and after not a little prayer. Opening the Scriptures, he besought them—by the

ignominy of Jesus, by His sorrow, by His agony, by His blood—not to destroy themselves, but to turn and live. The effect was most thrilling. “I did not make them weep,” said he, narrating the scene afterwards to his friend Alypius, “by first weeping over them; but, while I was preaching, their tears prevented mine. Then I own I could not restrain myself. After we had wept together, I began to entertain great hope of their amendment.” And, turning from the discourse which he had prepared, into a line of thought suited to “the present softness of their minds,” he urged, so earnestly and so affectionately, an immediate reformation, that from that very day the habit was discontinued.

On another occasion, he was on a visit to Cæsarea, and, ascending the pulpit, was endeavouring to persuade the people to abolish their barbarous sports, in which, at a certain season of the year, they fought publicly for several days. “I said what I could,” he wrote long afterwards, alluding to the scene, “and they shouted applause; but, whilst I heard only their acclamations, I thought I had done

nothing. At length, however, they began to weep, and then I had hope that the horrible custom, which they had received from their ancestors, would be abandoned. It is now upwards of eight years since that time," he adds, "and, by the grace of God, they have ever since been restrained from the practice."

It is said of Whitefield, that he always came down from the throne of grace with the tidings of salvation,—like the angel of the Apocalypse having a rainbow round his head. He came not to entertain or entrance or electrify, but to transact a great business with men for God; and souls bowed before his heart-melting message, like willows by the water-courses. The good bishop had the same estimate of his errand. "We must not imagine," referring to the occasion last noted, "that a man has spoken powerfully when he receives much applause. This is sometimes given to merely ornamental eloquence. But the sublime overwhelms the mind with its vehemence—it strikes them dumb—it melts them into tears."

Like the Great Preacher, "the common people heard him gladly."

“His excellence,” says the historian, “lay in exhibiting that which was useful to the vulgar, not that which was entertaining to the learned. The matter, rather than the manner, was his chief concern. An elaborate, highly finished, elegant style—then, as now, affected by so many as the perfection of pulpit-oratory—he eschewed as that ‘wisdom of words’ which rendered the cross of Christ of none effect. Despising the fastidiousness of cold critics, and intent on the one business of bringing souls to Christ and of feeding the sheep already folded, he was plain, downright, warm, affectionate, himself content to be nothing, if only Christ might be lifted up.”

Baxter, after his pithy fashion, describes preachers who “cut the throats of their sermons” by their worldly, carnal life. Augustine’s life was “a living epistle of Christ,” as distinct and legible as his words,—“the purity of his mind (as Herbert has it) breaking out and diluting itself even to his body, clothes, and habitation.”

Nothing could be simpler or more beautiful than his daily domestic habits. Choosing to

remain single, though not blaming marriage in others, he had drawn around him a goodly little fellowship, who, beneath his hospitable roof, prosecuted their studies for the ministry, and who saw in their master a pattern of “moderation” and unworldliness more impressive than all teachings. “All things were common,” Possidius tells us, “no one had more than another,—even he himself never being preferred.”* Microscopic and unfriendly eyes may detect in this a tinge of that asceticism which elsewhere was substituting for the warm, genial, homelike Christianity of the Gospel, a dreary, isolated, and isolating monachism. But

* Possidius, referring to his diet, furniture, and other household arrangements, adds:—“*Vestes ejus et calceamenta vel lectualia ex moderato et competente habitu erant, nec nitida nimium, nec abjecta plurimum: quia his plerumque vel jactare se insolenter homines solent, vel abjicere; ex utroque non quæ Jesu Christi sed quæ sua sunt iidem quærentes: at iste, ut dixi, medium tenebat, neque in dexteram, neque in sinistram declinans.*”

And, again, he writes:—“*Mensâ usus est frugali et parçâ, quæ quidem inter olera et legumina, etiam carnes aliquando propter hospites, vel quosque infirmiores, semper autem vinum habebat. Quid noverat, et docebat, ut apostolus dicit, quòd omnes creaturæ Dei bonæ sit, et nihil abjiciendum quod cum gratiarum actione percipitur,—sanctificatur enim per verbum Dei et orationem.*”

Augustine was not a monk; his soul was lighted with too heavenly a sunshine for that.

“Let the misanthrope shun men and abjure,—the most are rather loveable than hateful;
A man may travel through the world, and sow it thick with friendships.”

The bishop's home was a bright and happy spot; and not the least attraction was the ray which fell on it from heaven.

If ever conversation was “with grace seasoned with salt,” it was his. A single incident will illustrate it.

On his table he had a distich written, warning all his guests against slandering an absent brother:—

“*Quisquis amat dictis absentum rodere vitam,
Hanc mensam vetitam noverit esse sibi.*”

And the rule was not a dead letter. One day, we are told, certain bishops, his intimate friends, were with him, and the conversation took this turn. For a while, the good man sat silent, evidently much discomposed, until, at last, pointing to the lines, he mildly but firmly intimated, that either they must be erased, or he

must himself rise from the midst of the meal and retire to his bed-chamber.*

Deep was the well-spring of love which had been formed in that once rocky heart by the stroke of the Divine rod. "Thou who repair-est our breaches," he wrote in his diary, one day, recording the Divine healing of his own spirit, "and buildest up our decayed ruins with a word of Thy mouth—Thou who hast sown in Thy field, my heart, the good seed,—root out the weeds and thorns of vicious dispositions and habits, which else will choke the work and make it unfruitful. O sweetest, kindest, dearest Jesus! pour into me, I beg Thee, the abundance of Thy love, that there may be no remains of earthly or sensual desires or thoughts in my breast, but that Thou and Thy love may reign unrivalled there, and possess my heart entirely."

* Possidius, alluding to this, says:—"Ideo omnem convivam a superfluis et noxiis fabulis et detractationibus sese abstinere debere admonebat. Nam et quosdam suos familiarissimos cœpiscopos illius Scripturæ oblitos, et contra eam loquentes, tam asperè aliquando reprehendit commotus ut diceret, aut delendos esse illos de mensâ versus, aut se mediâ refectione ad suum cubiculum surrecturum. Quod ego," he adds, "et alii, qui illi mensæ interfuimus, experti sumus."

And this it was which made him so tender and considerate towards his fellows. Often he would spend a whole day—sometimes several successive days—in reconciling parties who were at variance. Knowing by experience the heart's deceitfulness, and knowing also the graciousness of the Divine Healer, he knew how to touch other hearts with the healing balm. To him many a torn bosom and many a troubled home owed the return of sunshine after a dark storm.

Himself “one of God's poor,”* he loved and cared for the poor.† “Man,” it has been said,

“Is God's image ; but a poor man is
Christ's stamp to boot : both images regard.
God reckons for him—counts the favour His.
Write ‘ So much giv'n to God.’ Thou shalt be heard.
Let thy alms go before, and keep heaven's gate
Open for thee ; or both may come too late.”

Augustine, at the close of his sermon, one day, observing the smallness of the offerings, said—
“I am a beggar for beggars, and take pleasure

* “Pauper Dei” he used to call himself.

† Possidius says—“Compauperum verò semper memor erat.”

in being so, in order that you may be numbered among the children of God." At times, rather than leave unrelieved cases of extreme suffering, he not only parted with all his own means but even "melted down the silver vessels of the Church."

XXVI.

“ His refuted quirks he still repeats ;
New raised objections with new quibbles meets ;
Till, sinking in the quicksand he defends,
He dies disputing, and the contest ends—
But not the mischiefs; they, still left behind,
Like thistle-seeds, are sown by every wind.”

AUGUSTINE was not a lover of controversy. His mild and gentle spirit would rather have dwelt with the meek dove than with the petrel which revels in the storm. But truth was dearer to him than ease or self-pleasing ; and so daring or so specious were the efforts of various heresiarchs in those days to erase from the Church's living creed some of the most precious doctrines of grace, that, on more than one occasion, his whole soul was “ stirred in him,” as for the very ark of God.

By profession a monk, and of blameless life, PELAGIUS had traversed various countries of

Europe, insinuating, in the most artful way, his heretical notions respecting grace. "I am much grieved for Pelagius the monk," a contemporary wrote; "consider what crowns must be reserved for those who stand firm, when men who have lived in so much mortification and continency appear to be so carried away." His views he would deliver, with a great appearance of modesty, in the form of queries suggested by others; whilst, to a select few whose affections he had ensnared, he would impart his real opinions.

One leading position was, the denial of human depravity. "The sin of Adam," he said, "hurt himself alone, and not mankind." And again:—"Infants are born in the same state as Adam was before the fall." Grace he held to be, not an inward renewal of the will by the almighty operation of the Holy Ghost, but an outward revelation simply—the example of Christ Jesus. Adam and Christ introduced—the one, sin—the other, righteousness—into the world, in no other sense than by example. The fall of man, and his need of a new birth, were dismissed as "pious imaginations." The

virtues of Abel, Enoch, Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, and the like, were the product of their natural powers, and proved "how great was the goodness of nature."

Man, he affirmed, could not practise goodness spontaneously, were it not equally in his power to do evil. "The goodness of nature was so apparent that it shewed itself even among Gentiles. How many virtuous philosophers had we read and heard of! Whence their goodness, were not nature good?"

The heresiarch, early in the fifth century, after propagating his sentiments in Italy, fled into Africa, on the sack of Rome by the Goths. And his mischievous zeal in that region at last stirred into activity the earnest watchman at Hippo.

The Manicheans had attempted to explain the great variety of human character by the idea of a physical difference in souls; some being the creation of "the evil spirit," and therefore naturally and essentially evil, and hopelessly enthralled by him,—whilst others derived from "the good spirit" so large a part of their nature as to find no difficulty in main-

taining their integrity. About the end of the third century, Origen had opposed to this theory the dogma—acquired in the Platonic school of Alexandria—that all souls are created by the one omnipotent God, and are endowed by Him with the power of choosing either good or evil, the free will of each, not any malign independent being, determining his precise line of action. In the course of the fourth century, Origen's writings had spread far and wide throughout Europe, rendering no small service in counteracting the poison of Manicheism. Among others, Pelagius had deeply studied them, drinking in their subtle teachings. The result was, that, in his zeal to maintain that no souls were the handiwork of the evil spirit, he lost sight of the fact of the corruption of our nature,—laying down as the basis of his own system the doctrine that, notwithstanding the fall, we are able, by our own inherent powers and without Divine aid, to do God's will.

Augustine, himself rejoicing in his emancipation from the Manichean delusion, might have been expected to lean towards the same extreme; but his inner conflicts had been too

real to leave him in any doubt about his own depravity and corruption. And, to prepare him for defending this fundamental position, He who knows the end from the beginning had been carrying him through these long years of trial and of triumph.

In an after-age, Luther contended for the grace and the glory of God against human merit, in the matter of the sinner's pardon ; in that age, Augustine contended for the same Divine grace and glory in the turning of the sinner's heart. The heresies of all ages have been little else than a new name or dress for the denial of these two great cardinal articles of a living soul and of a living Church.

At first, that he might "more easily profit him," Augustine did not name Pelagius, exposing only his mischievous tenets. Such was his personal prepossession for him, that he continued to hope against hope, not believing that one so eminently virtuous could be found guilty of so grave a heresy. At length, however, he took the field against him openly and avowedly. "Pelagius alone," he wrote, "is not now our object ; but many souls are in

danger of being beguiled. Let him be asked what he means precisely by the term 'grace;' and, if he be found to speak in the same manner as the Church of Christ, let us rejoice in him. For, whether he calls grace 'free-will,' or 'remission of sins,' or the 'precept of the law,' he explains not that grace of the Holy spirit, which conquers lusts and temptations, and which He who ascended into heaven has poured on us abundantly. The grace which Christian doctrine teaches, is not nature, but nature saved, and not by external doctrine, but by the supply of the Spirit and secret mercy. For, though natural gifts may be called grace, yet that grace by which we are predestinated, called, justified, glorified, is quite a different thing. It is of this the apostle speaks when he says, 'If by grace, then it is no more of works. And to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.' For, if Christ had not died for our sins, Pelagius' possibility of nature, which he makes to be grace, would have been just the same.

The heresiarch was summoned before a council of fourteen bishops in Palestine. In his plausible way, he spoke much of "Divine grace," confessing its necessity; but secretly he believed that "man might be without sin, and easily keep the commands of God if he would." The deception lay in attaching the term "grace" to whatever was the gift of God, so that "a man who, by the use of his natural powers, in conjunction with the aid of the revealed will of God, should expect to please God, might be said to be saved by grace." The council was cajoled, and ended by declaring him a "Christian brother."

But Augustine was not to be so cajoled. "Without doubt," he wrote to a member of the council, "the grace by which we are saved, is not that with which we are created. For, if those bishops who acquitted him, had understood that he called that grace which we have in common with the wicked, and that he denied that which we have as Christians and as sons of God, he would not have been borne with. I blame not, then, his judges, who understood the word 'grace' in its common

meaning." "But," he proceeded, vindicating a truth which to him was not a mere theological dogma, but a felt fact of his own consciousness, "this man imagines that he must believe God to be an acceptor of persons, if he believe that, without any preceding merits, God pities whom he wills, and calls and sanctifies whom He pleases. He forgets that to the condemned his punishment is a thing justly due, and to the saved soul the deliverance is mere unmerited grace, so that neither can the one complain of having not deserved the condemnation, nor the other boast as if he had had any claim."

With the tenderness of a true shepherd, we find him appealing to one whom Pelagius had been labouring to pervert, thus:—"In everything give thanks. Ye do so, because ye have it not of yourselves. For who hath distinguished you from Adam, the mass of death and perdition? Was it not He who came to seek and to save the lost? When the apostle says, 'Who made thee to differ?' does he answer, 'My good will, my faith, my righteousness?' does he not say, 'What hast thou

which thou hast not received?' We hope, considering the humility in which Demetrias was educated, that, when she read Pelagius' words—if she have read them—she sighed, smote her breast, and perhaps wept, and prayed, that, as these were not her words, so neither might they be her creed,—that she might glory, not in herself, but in the Lord. If you narrowly observe," he continued, "though the writer speaks of grace, he does it with guarded ambiguity;—it may mean nature, or doctrine, or forgiveness of sins, or the example of Christ. But find, if you can, one word which owns a positive work of the Holy Spirit on the mind, actually imparting the power of loving God. Gladly would I see such a confession in some much admired writers; but as yet I have not discovered it."

One day, some friends were conversing on the subject, and he said:—"The great sin of Pelagianism is, that it makes a man forget why he is a Christian."

Another day, an inquirer was puzzled to know how a man could be responsible for wrong-doing, if he had not the power of doing

good. "If I do wrong," said the visitor, "am not I just to pray that God would give me what He has withheld? It is not my own fault that I am debarred from the power of doing good; therefore how can I be blamed?" "Nay," replied Augustine, "thy own conscience condemns thee when thou sinnest. This evil heart of thine is itself sin." And, turning his thoughts into another channel, he added:—"O man, in the precept, know what thou oughtest to possess; in rebuke, know thou art without it, through thy own fault; in prayer, know whence thou mayest receive what thou desirest."

On another occasion, as he sat alone, he recorded his secret feeling, thus:—"O Lord, who hast formed and sustained me from my mother's womb, suffer me not, I implore Thee, to fall under that condemnation, of attempting to steal away any part of Thy glory. Thine is all the good; and fit it is, that thine should be all the honour of it. I most humbly confess my spiritual poverty, that I have nothing of my own. I do look upon myself to be no better than vanity, a mass of corruption, a dark and

empty creature, a barren soil, not able, without the fructifying dew of Thy blessing, to bring forth any fruit but the venomous and noisome weeds of shame and sin and death. If I have any good disposition, it is of Thy infusing; if I have persevered in doing well, it is because Thy strength enabled me; if I fell off from a good course, it was because Thy grace did not preserve me: and in each of those relapses I had lain and been lost for ever, had not Thy mighty hand raised me out of the dust of death."

And, one evening, his meditation took another turn, thus:—"Infinite, God knows, are our hazards; and all our way is spread so thick with traps and toils, that we cannot tread one step where there is not some net laid for our souls. And whose wisdom and care are sufficient to escape them all? Snares in our plenty, and snares in our poverty; snares in our company, and snares in our most private retirements; snares in our pleasures and the ordinary refreshments of life, and snares in our very fastings and most mortifying austerities. Abroad or at home, asleep or awake, we are

never safe ; but every word and action, every thought and design, is hazardous and ensnaring. Such is our condition, and so manifold our danger. But do 'Thou, Lord, deliver us from the toils of the hunter, that we may give thanks unto 'Thy name, saying with the holy Psalmist—' If the Lord Himself had not been on our side, our enemies had swallowed us up quick ; but praised be the Lord, who hath not given us over for a prey unto their teeth.' ”

It was thus that his humble and reverend spirit lay continually in the dust,—“ trembling, yet happy ; confident, yet meek.” And such a spirit shrank with intensest sensitiveness from whatever would lift itself against the Lord.* Like the believers of Ephesus, he

* In an “ Historical Sketch ” of Augustine by Philip Schaff, D. D., the author speaks of the Reformers as “ following him, at least in the beginning, even to the dizzy abyss of the doctrine of Predestination, which Luther, Melancthon, and still more Calvin, pushed into the terrible logical consequences of Supralapsarianism.” Dr. Schaff must surely know that Augustine's views on man's utter and hopeless depravity, and on God's free and sovereign grace are identical with Luther's and Calvin's. The writings of neither contain any language stronger than that which we have quoted from Augustine. Apart from technical phrases, such as Su-

“could not bear them which were evil;” and, living in an age when a proud and vain spirit was eating out the Church’s life, he had scarcely laid down his weapon against one opposer, when another demanded its unsheathing.

In those years, there arose in Africa a sect which peculiarly vexed his meek spirit.

One night, on his way home from a pastoral visitation, his guide, mistaking the road, led him by a different route from that which he had intended to take; and he thus escaped a plot which had been laid for his life. The assassins were a body of heretics, called Circumcelliones, who were filled with such hatred of all the pastors of the Church that they “again and again,” “waylaid them, attacked them with an armed force, and mutilated and even killed them.”

pralapsarianism and Sublapsarianism, does not the whole matter resolve itself into this—Is God a being so imperfect as to have recourse to unexpected and unanticipated after-thoughts? or, are all His works known to Him and ordained by Him from the beginning?” “But,” it is asked, “may not God foreknow, and then ordain?” Nothing, we answer, can be known but what is certain and fixed; and, if certain and fixed, whence the certainty. Is it not from God’s eternal purpose?

A dispute had arisen, a century previous, whether a particular bishop had been legally ordained; and so fierce had the strife grown, that the schismatic body refused to recognise the general Church as within the pale of Christian fellowship. Broken up into parties, the Donatists found themselves identified with certain furious maniacs—"a mere banditti (as Augustine described them), sons of violence and bloodshed, who valued neither their own lives nor those of their neighbours, and who not unfrequently in a fit of phrenzy would commit suicide." These latter were the Circumcelliones.

What was to be done? Augustine addressed the Emperor. "Such as are peaceable," said he, "must be reasoned with: compulsory conversions are not genuine, and tend only to harden men in sin; therefore I recommend preaching and arguments." But the savage and lawless Circumcelliones could be restrained only by the civil sword. Pains and penalties were employed,—though not with the exact discrimination which Augustine had advised. The result was—the schism almost dwindled

away, many even of the most untractable confessing their error and with much humility and joy returning to the Church's fold.

Augustine, by these events, was betrayed, in his subsequent writings, into an approval of harsh measures for the eradication of error, such as his meek spirit, left to its own feelings, would have loathed. But even the "failing leaned to virtue's side." It was that zeal for the Lord which had before suggested to John the calling down of the fire. Even the Reformers of Germany and of England made the same grand mistake. The idea of toleration belongs peculiarly to our own age.

XXVII.

“ If still the sun should hide his face,
Thy house would but a dungeon prove ;
Thy works, night’s captives. Oh ! let grace
Drop from above.”

BACON remarks, that “there is a superstition in avoiding superstition, when men think to do best if they go farthest from the superstition formerly received. Therefore,” he adds, “care should be had that (as it fareth in ill purgings) the good be not taken away with the bad.”

The Church, in Augustine’s time, had “left its first love;” and, with a spiritual declension, there had come a grievous departure from the outward simplicity of early days. Carnal splendour and priestly pride were overspreading, like some vast upas-tree, the fair face of apostolic Christianity ; sacraments were taking

the place of the word; and a nascent ecclesiasticism was supplanting Christ.

Augustine had found in Christ his personal Saviour; and, in all the power of a living faith, he was lifting up his voice like a trumpet, and proclaiming the heaven-sent message. But this very engrossment with the grand central reality made him content to retain not a little of the death-clothes which encumbered the risen man.

This explains certain expressions which fell from him, exalting unduly the pabtismal sacrament. To use such expressions in a "sacramentarian" sense is a fraud. They are no more a part of the real man, than the ceremonies of death which Lazarus brought with him from his grave were a part of his living self.

At the risk of repetition, we reïterate this position. Any biographer who overlooks it, at once misapprehends the man, and dishonours that Lord who made him what he was. "Many weeds," it has been said,

"Run rank in pride, if men have dubbed them cedars."

The preacher of Hippo, if he were with us at this hour, would disown all brotherhood or sympathy with any save the earnest, soul-seeking minister who glories in exalting Christ.

Let the man himself speak.

Writing, one day, to a brother who seemed to be yielding himself to the prevailing tendency to ritualism, he says:—"It grieves me that so many salutary precepts of Scripture should be held cheap, whilst our religion abounds with commandments of men. All those customs which do not carry in their appearance an evident reason for their existence, I am free to say, ought to be laid aside. Admit, it cannot be proved that they are contrary to the faith, yet they burden with servile usages that religion which God, in His mercy, intended to make free. In this respect, the condition of the Jews is more tolerable; they are subject, indeed,—but to Divine ordinances, not to the precepts of men. However the Church, surrounded as she is with chaff and tares, endures many things, yet she cannot tolerate what is contrary to faith and practice."

On another occasion, he wrote:—"No bap-

tized person can be saved in his sins. Without holiness, none can possibly enter heaven."

And, again:—"I starve in the midst of plenty, and am but mocked with the empty pomp of a feast,—when my soul feeds on anything else but THEE; for Thou alone canst satisfy my hunger, assuage my pains, and fill my large desires."

The older he grew, the deeper was his attachment to the doctrines of grace.

A holy man once wrote—

"If thou shalt let this venom lurk,
And in suggestions fume and work,
My soul will turn to bubbles straight,
And thence by kind,
Vanish into a wind
Making Thy workmanship deceit."

Augustine also, day by day, realized more intensely the heart's desperate deceitfulness. "The house, I confess, is strait," was his secret breathing, one evening; "do Thou enlarge it! ruinous, but do Thou repair it! full of pollutions, which might be a nuisance to eyes so pure—I know and with grief confess it; but whose help shall I implore in

cleansing it, except thine alone. To Thee, therefore, I cry instantly, begging that Thou wilt 'purge me from my secret faults,' and especially 'keep Thy servant from presumptuous sins, that they never get the dominion over me.' " And, another day :—" Enable me, sweet Jesus, I beseech Thee, to lay aside every weight. Let my body be in constant subjection to my soul, my senses to reason, and my reason to Thy grace, that so both the outward and the inward man may be ever obedient and disposed to do thy will. Fill my heart, my mouth, and all my bones, with Thy praise. Enlighten my understanding, and exalt my affections, that I may soar upwards to Thee; and set me free from those fetters which fasten me down and are an encumbrance to me, that I may leave all here below, and serve and fix and dwell upon Thee alone !"

A great divine, on his death-bed, said :—" I have been a poor wretched sinner; but I stand at the best pass that ever a man did—Christ is mine, and I am His." And, as a friend came in and asked—" What think you now of Christ ?" he replied, with a heavenly glow

on his countenance—"My Lord and Master is the Chief of ten thousand of thousands; none is comparable to Him in heaven or in earth." And, some others joining him, he added:—"Dear brethren, do all for HIM! pray, for Christ; preach, for Christ; feed the flock committed to your charge, for Christ; do all, for Christ!" In like manner, Augustine was led by his deep necessity into a keener sense of Christ's glorious fullness. "If Christ, he would say, "is really the foundation, our love to Him must outweigh all other interests, and the soul must be ready to sacrifice everything to Him. . Pour Thyself into my heart; and let it overflow and be so entirely filled with Thy pleasures, that there may be no room left for the trifling vanities here below! Help me against the insinuations of such, and be Thou the joy of my heart! take it all to Thyself, and keep thy continual residence there."

On another occasion, his massive theology took shape thus:—"The contrast betwixt the two Adams becomes more and more the central point of my faith. In the one, we are guilty and corrupt and undone; in the other, we are

accepted and renewed and exalted. 'In Adam we all die'—all the first Adam's race; 'in Christ we all are made alive'—all who are united to him by a living, life-giving faith."

Another characteristic of these years was, his deepening relish for the Word. "Wondrous depths of Thy Word!" he exclaimed, one day, from the pulpit; "whose surface, behold, is before us, inviting us little ones; yet are they a wondrous depth, O my God, a wondrous depth! It is awful to look therein; an awfulness of horror, and a trembling of love."*

* Neander says of Augustine and of his times:—"To this period was transmitted from the primitive Christian days the right, closely connected with the consciousness of the universal Christian priesthood, and belonging to all Christians, of instructing and edifying themselves by going direct to the fountain of the Divine Word. Hence manuscripts of the Bible were multiplied and exposed for sale. It was regarded as the chief part of a pious Christian education, both in men and in women, to become early familiar with the Holy Scriptures."

And the Dean of Westminster, to the same purport, writes:—"Perhaps in no Christian writer of any age do we count more, or more varied, expressions of a rapturous delight in the Word of God; no one laid himself down in its green pastures with a deeper and a fuller joy; no one more entirely felt that he might evermore draw water from these 'wells of salvation' without fear of drawing them dry."

Another day, comparing the earnest believer to an "ant," he described him as "treasuring up from the Divine Word that which he might have occasion to use in the time of need." "Do not allow yourselves," said he, "to be so immersed in present earthly things as to be obliged to say, 'I have no time to read or to hear God's Word.'" And again:—"What food is for the body, such are the Holy Scriptures for the soul—the source of substantial strength.

If Augustine were among us, what a withering frown he would cast on those blinded guides who would heal wounded consciences by sending them to the priest's "confessional," instead of declaring to them the simple Word! "Go," said he, one day, to his people, "and tell your difficulties to some Christian neighbour or friend; and, if the passage be too hard for them, pray for light from above." * It was not uncommon, at the close of a sermon such as Augustine would preach, for one after another to retire into a side-chamber where the

* "Ad ipsum Dominum pulsa orando, pete, insta."

Scriptures lay open for the people; and to read or listen there for hours, "thirsting for the word of God."

Vinet once remarked—"A man in reason, a child in heart,—such must the Christian be." Such was now the great Church-doctor, and growingly as he hastened heavenward. "I am a little child," he said, one day; "but my Father always lives, and is my sufficient guardian. My hope is this, that Thou art faithful—that Thou dost not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but with the temptation also makest a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it. Lord, not with doubting, but with assured confidence, do I love Thee; Thou hast smitten my heart with Thy Word, and I have loved Thee."

Augustine was not a stoic; he was too human, too real, to affect not to feel the sharp edge of the Father's pruning-knife. But he saw it in the Fatherly hand; and that made all well. "Is not the life of man upon earth," he said, on one occasion, "all trial? Who wishes for troubles and difficulties? Thou commandest them to be endured, not to be

loved. No man loves what he endures, though he love to endure. For, though he rejoices that he endures, he had rather there were nothing for him to endure. All my hope is nowhere but in Thy exceeding great mercy. Give what thou enjoimest, and enjoin what Thou wilt. Too little doth he love Thee, who loves anything with Thee, which he loveth not for Thee. O Love, who ever learnest and never consumest! O Charity, my God! kindle me!"

Vr.

XXVIII.

“Give me simplicity, that I may live ;
So live, and like, that I may know Thy ways,
Know them and practise them. Then shall I give,
For this poor wreath, to Thee a crown, of praise.”

As years rolled on, his gentle but brave spirit was tossed by buffeting waves.

One was, the continued hardness of sundry members of his flock. “I do not wish,” was his appeal to them one day from the pulpit, “to be saved without you, why should I? why am I your bishop? why am I in the world? Only, to live in Christ,—but *with you*.” On these occasions, the great tear not seldom trembled in his dimmed eye.

The bitterness of this trial, only a heart touched with a like compassion for souls can know. His one business in life still seemed to be, to win souls. Oftentimes, five days in

succession—on some days twice—he preached to “perishing sinners.” “Human language,” says a contemporary, who heard him, “seemed insufficient to express, in a fit and lively manner, the thoughts and feelings which, with the speed of lightning, streamed through his soul.

He set before him, as the aim of his spiritual oratory, to preach himself and his hearers into Christ, so that all might live with him, and he, with all, in Christ. This was his passion, his honour, his boast, his joy, his riches.”*

Now, more than ever, he felt intensely that the secret of all pulpit-power was PRAYER. “Let the preacher,” said he, one day, “who would be understood and be heard with pleasure, pray before he speak. Let him lift up his thirsty soul unto God, before he pronounce anything. For, since there are many things which may be said, and many modes of saying the same thing, who knows, except Him who

* Possidius says:—“*Faciebat hoc tanquam speculator (i.e., watchman) a Domino constitutus domui Israel; prædicans verbum; atque instans opportunè, importunè: arguens, hortans, increpans, in omni longanimitata, et doctrinâ; præcipuèque operam dans instruere eos qui essent idonei et alios docere.*”

knows the hearts of all men, what is most expedient to be said at the present hour? and who can cause us to speak what we ought, and as we ought, except Him in whose hands we and our words are? And by these means he may learn all that is to be taught, and may acquire a faculty of speaking as becomes a pastor."

Another deep trial visited him. The Empire was reeling, under the shock of the Gothic invasion; and its calamities were attributed by the pagan to the baleful effects of Christianity. The calumny painfully wounded the bishop's sensitive heart; and, to prove its groundlessness, he set himself, in his sixtieth year, to prepare his great work, "The City of God." The noble "apology" cost him the leisure hours of nearly thirteen years; and right valiantly did he do battle in it for the faith.

"The seeds of the Empire's dissolution," said he, "were sown, ages ago, in the growing dissoluteness and corruption. And, so far has Christianity been from precipitating the crisis, that the invader spared every Roman who fled

for refuge to the Christian temples—the only instance known where the lives of the vanquished were spared on account of their religion.”

“But see,” said the pagan, “how many Christians are led captive!”

“Yes,” replied Augustine; “but they cannot be led to any place where they do not find their God.”

In the town of Nola, some of his people suffered from the barbarian ravages. No sooner did he hear of their distress, than he sent them relief, even reducing himself to poverty in sharing their afflictions.

A heavenly fervour seemed, more and more, to breathe in his every word and act. “Suffer me not, Lord,” was his holy aspiration, on one occasion, “to be tormented on account of gold and silver; for, where all my wealth is, Thou knowest.” And, on another occasion, he wrote:—“Our great things are, not here, but in the ‘city of God.’ The world, with its glory and grandeur, will soon perish; and a symbol of this is Alaric’s devastation of the noble Capitol. But the ‘city of God’ is

founded on a rock and the day is at hand when her holy and happy citizens shall enter into their abiding rest."

Bacon describes riches as "the baggage of virtue." "The Roman word,"* he says, "is better; for, as the baggage is to an army, so is riches to virtue—it cannot be spared or left behind, but it hindereth the march; yea, and the care of it sometimes loseth or disturbeth the victory." Never was combatant more keenly sensitive to this "weight" than Augustine. "To you, who are God's children," he would say, "I appeal for whatever I need; for I prefer living by your free-will offerings to the harassing cares of wealth."† Again and again, he declined large legacies which Christian friends had bequeathed to him.‡ He

* "Impedimenta."

† On this point, Possidius writes:—"Alloquebatur plebem Dei. malle se ex collationibus magis plebis Dei vivere, quàm illarum possessionum curam vel gubernationem pati; et paratum se esse illis cedere ut eo modo omnes Dei servi et ministri viverent, quo in vetere Testamento leguntur altari deservientes de eodem comparticipari. Sed," he adds, "nunquam id laici suscipere voluerunt."

‡ Possidius says, again:—"Aliquas eum hæreditates remeasse novimus non quia pauperibus inutiles esse possent,

“looked for a city which hath foundations;” and he would suffer no one to “make his glorying void.”

Amidst all his labours as a writer, he never for a moment lost sight of the flock. “In sermons,” says Herbert, “there is a kind of state; in catechising there is a humbleness very suitable to the Christian regeneration.” Like a true pastor, Augustine was constantly face to face with his people. Counselling, one day, a youthful minister, he said:—“You are engaged in some agreeable study, and are told that you must proceed to catechise. You are vexed that the course of your work is interrupted; and, from the agitation of your mind, you are unfitted to discharge the work itself. The teacher, therefore, must himself learn those things which may exhilarate his own mind; for God loveth a cheerful giver. To this end, place before you the meek and charitable example of the Son of God, to shame you out of your pride and impatience; that, if indeed

sed quoniam justum et æquum esse videbat, ut a mortuorum vel filiis vel parentibus vel affinibus magis possiderentur, quibus ea deficientes dimittere noluerunt.”

you have any more useful study to prosecute concerning yourself, you may then expect that God will speak to you in it more powerfully, when you have undertaken cheerfully to speak for him as well as you could to others. We are poor judges of the best order of things; and, when we consider how much better it is to leave the direction of times and seasons with the all-wise God, we shall not take it amiss that the providential calls to work disturbed the order which we had prescribed to ourselves, and that His will took place before ours."

There is a way of doing ministerial work which hardens alike "priest" and "people." A man may be busy—very busy, and yet be a mere machine—a spiritual automaton. Even Christ's true minister is caught oftentimes in this snare. "The name of Christ," as some one says, "may be affixed to a work, and the work be His no longer." Augustine was keenly alive to the peril; and he was in the secret of the only safeguard. "The tediousness," said he to the same youthful minister, "of that trite and plain road of catechising should be smoothed by Divine love in the heart."

How anxiously he still fanned the flame of that "divine love" in his own heart, we gather from glimpses into his inner breathings, which are ever and anon presenting themselves. "To Thee," we have him whispering, one day, for example, "O joy and desire of my heart, I cry aloud and from the bottom of my heart. I call within, because I know Thee there; for, wert not Thou in me, I should not be at all; and, were not I in Thee, Thou wouldest not be in me." And, again:—"I am wounded with the darts of Thy love, and burn with eager desire of seeing and being inseparably united to Him whom my soul longeth to enjoy. How sweet, O gracious Lord, who in wonderful kindness hast so loved, and saved, and enlivened, and sanctified, and exalted us, how inexpressibly sweet are the thoughts and the remembrance of Thee!"

And, another day, thus:—"This is my hope, and the joy of my confidence. He loves His own flesh, His own body, and His own bowels. That flesh of ours, in which He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven and now does sit in heavenly places, cannot but

love us, because this is in effect but to love itself: We have the privilege of our own blood flowing in His veins: We are His body, and His substance. He is our Head, from whence the members are derived, to which they are inseparably united. O marvellous mystery! O inexplicable conjunction! O mercy most adorable; ever to be admired, ever to be loved!"

To have fellowship now with Christ in His acceptance before God in heaven, is to have fellowship with Him also in His rejection by man on earth. Day by day, Augustine found this truth more intensely real. "Where there is rejoicing in the world," he remarked on one occasion, "there is no rejoicing in the Lord: where there is rejoicing in the Lord, there is no rejoicing in the world. Let rejoicing in the Lord prevail, till the rejoicing in the world be ended. Let the rejoicing in the Lord be always on the increase; the rejoicing in the world always lessening, till it come to an end." And he added:—"This is not said as though, when we are in the world, we ought not to rejoice, but that, when we are even in the world, we may rejoice already in the Lord."

The happy, heavenly tone of his soul during these years, when he devoted so many hours to his great work, "The City of God," is indicated by such breathings as the following:—"O heavenly Jerusalem! our common mother! Thou beautiful spouse of Christ! my soul hath loved thee exceedingly; and all my faculties are ravished with thy charms. O what graces, what glory, what noble state, appear in every part of thee! Most exquisite is thy form; and thou alone art beauty without blemish. Rejoice and dance for joy, O daughter of my King; for thy Lord Himself, fairer than all the sons of men, hath 'pleasure in thy beauty.'"

And, another day:—"Thy light and glory, and all thy happiness is the incessant contemplation of the Divine King; for this King of kings is in the midst of thee, and all His host are ministering round about Him continually. There are the melodious choirs of angels; there the sweet fellowship and company of the heavenly inhabitants; there the joyful pomp of all those triumphant souls who, from their sore trials and travels through this valley of

tears, at last return victorious to their native country; there the goodly fellowship of prophets, whose eyes God opened to take a prospect of far-distant mysteries; there the twelve leaders of the Christian armies, the blessed apostles; there the noble army of martyrs; there the convention of confessors; there the holy men and women who, in the days of their flesh, were mortified to the pleasures of sin and of the world; there the virgins and youths whose blooming virtues put out early fruit; there the sheep and lambs who have escaped the ravening wolf and all the snares laid for their destruction."

And, again:—"These now all rejoice in their proper mansions; and, though each differ from other in degrees of glory, yet all agree in bliss and joy, diffused to all in common; and the happiness of every one is esteemed each man's own, for there charity reigns in its utmost perfection, because God is all in all, whom they continually behold, and, beholding, continually admire, and praise and love, and love and praise, without intermission, without end, without weariness or distraction

of thought. This is their constant, their delightful employment. And oh! how happy shall I be, how exquisitely, how incessantly happy, myself to bear a part with them—to behold his face in glory, and to be made partaker of that whereof He hath given me the comfortable hope when saying to His Father, ‘I will that they whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.’ ”

The veteran preacher was feeling more and more vividly, each year, the blessing of waiting, in his ministry, simply and expectingly upon God. “At the hour of speaking itself,” he remarked, on one occasion, “a faithful spirit will think his Lord’s words adapted to his circumstances—‘Think not what or how ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.’ If the Holy Spirit speak in those who are delivered up to persecutors for Christ, why not also in those who deliver Christ to learners?”

It is a maxim of George Herbert’s—

“Usefulness comes by labour.”

Augustine was not a fanatic, despising or neglecting diligent study. "If any say," he added, on the occasion just noted, "that men need to know no rules nor follow any studies, it might be said also that men need not to pray because our Lord saith, 'Your Father knoweth what ye have need of before ye ask Him : ' and at this rate the rules of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus might be superseded. Prayer and study should go hand in hand ; and the two Epistles to Timothy, and that to Titus, are of standing authority in the Church, and ought to be deeply meditated upon by every one who undertakes the offices of a teacher."

A holy, mellowed light, falling on his chastened soul, seemed to tell that he was nearing the rest above. One day, gently solacing a tried believer, he said :—"The will of God is sometimes that thou shouldest be whole, sometimes that thou shouldest be sick. If, when thou art whole, God's will be sweet, and, when thou art sick, God's will be bitter,—thou art not of a right heart. Wherefore ? Because thou wilt not make right thy will according to God's will, but wilt bend God's will to thine.

That will is right, but thou art crooked: thy will must be made right to that, not that made crooked to thee; and thou wilt have a right heart. It is well with thee in this world; be God blessed who comforteth thee: It goeth hardly with thee in this world; be God blessed because He chasteneth thee."

And, on another occasion, a glimpse of the glory, now so near at hand, opened upon him, thus:—"O happy state! O truly glorious kingdom! where eternity is continued through one endless day—one ever-blooming spring! where they who have been victorious in their spiritual warfare, join in concert with the blessed angels, and sing without ceasing the songs of Sion! where a never-fading crown adorns every head, and exquisite joy overflows every heart! O when will it please God to give me leave to lay down this load and lumber of flesh, and to admit me without spot or corruption into the true rest, the transporting delight, of that blissful place,—that I may walk about the beauteous walls of the city of God—view all her palaces, and receive a crown at the hand of my merciful Judge?

When shall I make one in that holy choir, and behold the majestic presence of my Maker with ‘the spirits of just men made perfect?’ When shall I see my dear redeemer face to face?”

These were no mere devout rhapsodies—no unchastened utterances of a soul which had not learned to lie down in the dust, and to stand in awe before the Holy One. They were the calm, quiet longings of a loving child, who—counting it no presumption to feel, even here, at home in his Father’s house—yearned as became him,

“To tread the golden streets above, and
join the glorious throng.”

XXIX.

“ Storms and tempests, darkly warring,
 Bid me seek a better home ;
Earth is with her joys receding,
 Angel-voices whisper—‘ Come ! ’ ”

THE great Church-father was about to pass from the scene of strife and of labour to the joy of his Lord ; and stormy indeed was the passage by which he was to reach his quiet haven.

It was in the early summer of the year four hundred and twenty-eight, that a formidable host of some fifty thousand barbarians crossed the sea from Spain. Landing on the coast of Africa with Genseric, the Vandal chief, at their head, they ravaged cities and villages, “ sparing no age or sex, and raging more fiercely than wild beasts of prey.” The Roman general met the invader in a pitched battle, but was driven

into the fortified town of Hippo. This was his last stronghold.

The venerable bishop trembled for his beloved flock. The Vandals were Arians; and, with a wild ferocity, they were hunting down all who were zealous for the true faith. It was a critical occasion; but Augustine was not daunted. "Whoever flees," were his manly words to a brother-shepherd, "so that the Church is not deprived of the necessary ministrations, he does what God commands or permits. But whoever so flees that the flock of Christ is left without the nourishment by which it spiritually lives, he is an hireling, who, seeing the wolf come, flees because he has no care for the sheep."

The city was "straitly besieged;" and, week after week, the faithful watchman occupied his watch-tower, feeling (as he said) that "the bonds, which the love of Christ had knit, should not be rent asunder."

One evening, as he sat alone in his chamber after the labours of the day, he poured forth his breathings thus:—"See, my God, and King, see the good Shepherd bringing to Thee the

sheep committed to His charge. He undertook to save men by Thy appointment; and He hath performed the undertaking, so as to restore to Thee pure and spotless Thy once polluted creatures. He brings in safety back that prey which the wolf and robber had carried off by violence. He brings into Thy presence that servant whom his own guilty conscience had put upon fleeing from Thy sight, that so the punishment due to his deserts might be remitted through his Lord's satisfaction, and the offender, who had nothing to look for but to be banished for ever into hell, might, under the protection of this glorious Conqueror, be assured of admittance into His heavenly country." It was thus that the fountain of his deep compassion for souls never grew dry;—the "nether springs" in his heart were kept in direct communication with the "upper springs" in the heart of God.

It is told of John Eliot, "the apostle to the Indians," that, on his deathbed, he was found one day with a young savage at his side, teaching him his letters; and, on being asked why he did not now take rest, he replied, "I

have often prayed to God to make me useful, and, now that I can no longer preach, He leaves me strength enough to teach this poor child his alphabet." Augustine was fired with a like zeal. "He preached the Word of God, in the church," says Possidius, "even to his very last illness, without intermission, full of vigour, sound in understanding, and in all the power of his best days."*

"A thousand hearts kindled by thee with consecrated
fire!

They live but in thy words;

Thou art expanded into them—one faith, one hope,
one spirit;

They breathe but in thy breath, their minds are pas-
sive unto thine.

Thou turnest the key of their love, bending their affec-
tions to thy purpose;

And all, in sympathy with thee, tremble with tumultu-
ous emotions."

A great Reformer used to say, with tears in his eyes, that, before he set out upon the heavenly road, the sun was already past noon.

* Possidius' words are:—"Verbum Dei usque ad ipsam suam extremam ægritudinem imprætermisè, alacriter, et fortiter, sanâ mente sanoque consilio in ecclesiâ prædicavit."

Augustine also had the same grief. "Too late did I love Thee," he would say; * "thou Beauty of ancient days, yet ever new! too late I loved Thee. I searched for Thee abroad, deformed I, plunging midst those fair forms which Thou hadst made; and, all the while Thou wert with me, but I was not with Thee. Things held me far from Thee, which, unless they were in Thee, were not at all. Thou calledst, and shoutedst, and burstedst my deafness. Thou flashedst, shonest, and scatteredst my blindness. Thou breathedst odours, and I drew in breath and did pant for Thee. Thou touchedst me, and I burned for Thy peace."

It was now the third month of the siege, when, sitting one day at table, surrounded by the little circle of brethren who had taken refuge from some neighbouring towns under his roof, he gave utterance to his emotions, in a kind of half-conscious soliloquy, thus:—"Happy, beyond imagination happy, is that soul which, making its escape out of this earthly prison, wings its way to heaven without any

* St. Paul often felt this pang. "Who also," says he, for example, "were in Christ before me."

restraint—which sees its dearest Lord face to face, triumphing in the joys of everlasting glory; possessing Thee, the object of its love and long pursuit; and singing hymns of never-ceasing praise to the honour of her King and Redeemer; satiated with the plenteousness of Thy house, and with the rivers of Thy overflowing pleasures! O happy company of heavenly citizens! O glorious pomp of souls returning from their toilsome pilgrimage to the excellence of the beauty and splendour and majesty of Thy courts!”

To more than one anxiously-observant eye, that evening, the words, and, still more, the unearthly look which accompanied them, seemed as if already he were treading the vestibule heaven.

“Glorious hopes, ineffable imaginings,”

marked him out for a speedy departure to a region of brighter vision.

A day or two afterwards, the din of conflict grew louder, and tidings came in that one and another of his beloved flock had fallen. It was more, almost, than his gentle spirit could

bear. "What I pray to God for," he said, looking out upon the scene of carnage, "is, either that He will deliver the city from the enemy, or, if He have determined otherwise, that He will strengthen His servant for his sufferings, or, which I would rather"—and, in uttering the words, a sort of prophetic glow came over him as if the wish were already more than half accomplished—"that He would call me out of this world unto Himself."

At the end of that week, he was seized with "a fever," which, "from the first," says his friend, "he appeared to hail as the messenger sent to call him home."

If ever sick-chamber was lighted with a heavenly glory, it was the humble apartment where the illustrious Church-father now lay down to die.

"What love of Christ can that be," he would say, in other years, "when we fear to go to Him whom we say we love? O brethren, let us be ashamed to say we love, while we are afraid to go to Him." And now, as the celestial city with its bright glories rose before his eye, he was "quite unable" (says Posidius) to restrain within him the ardent longings of his

soul to meet his Lord." "My God," he would say, "how I long to hear that transporting music, and those Divine songs, which publish the mysteries and glories of the blessed Trinity! My God, how honoured to be so soon admitted, not only to hear, but myself to join in concert with the sons of God who sing to their Christ and King the pleasant songs of Sion."

Another homeward-bound pilgrim has written—

"I see, by faith, my holy home above,
Jerusalem!
Adorn'd so richly by my Saviour's love
With pearl and gem.

"I long to enter the eternal gates,
And sin no more;
My best and sweetest praise suspended waits,
For that glad hour.

"Then shall my harp possess no broken string,
My song to mar;
And, in the everlasting praise I bring,
No note to jar."

With an eye undimmed and with a certain Divine halo on his calm brow, the aged saint lay, day after day, surrounded by weeping friends, and his heart already half in heaven. "O the

ravishing entertainment," he would whisper, "of those harmonious hymns, the melody of angels, and the sweet notes of songs, in concert, sung by each member of the heavenly choir! No mixture of bitter pollutes those holy joys, no railing or revelling, no fear or disquiet, no doubt or uneasiness or mutual distrust; but perfect peace and love, eternal praise and thanksgiving, unbroken rest, and joy everlasting in the Holy Ghost.

And, another day, he broke forth thus:—"O glorious kingdom, where God is seen face to face—where the mind is feasted and fully satisfied with knowledge, ever seeing, and ever desiring to see more, but desiring without uneasiness, and satisfied so as never to be cloyed! O life truly worthy of the name, because everlasting, ever blessed! A life of joy unpolluted with sufferings or sorrow, where the Sun of righteousness sheds upon every head the refreshing beams of His excellent beauty, and where the Light is so diffused that every tenant of the blissful regions shines by the reflection; for, being constantly united to the Deity, they are transformed into the likeness of the Divine

immortality and perfections, thus receiving the full effect of the promise of their holy Lord, 'Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me,' and 'all may be one in us, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us!'"

To the last, he watched for souls with the tenderest solicitude. Boniface, the Roman general conducting the defence of the city, and one of the most heroic soldiers of the day, had long shared the bishop's friendship; and, though many an earnest colloquy had passed between them on the great business of eternity, the warrior had been too incessantly dazzled with the vision of human glory to be able to fix his heart on God; and Augustine was leaving him with the afflicting conviction that his prayers and his pains for him had all been in vain. Calling him to his bed-side, and desiring they should be left alone, he appealed to the commander once more, "endeavouring to draw him from the love of the world to God." The two friends wept, and wept again. It was

Augustine's last effort to pluck a brand from the fire.

Some weeks before his departure, Hewitson lay, one day, recalling the sins of his ministry, and bewailing his so imperfect labour for precious souls. "Oh!" said he, "I am naked, utterly naked!" Often, in his familiar conversation, Augustine had been used to remark, that "even experienced and notable Christians and ministers ought not to quit this mortal scene without much penitence and brokenness of spirit." * And now, in these closing days, a most characteristic scene presented itself. "He had the seven penitential psalms," (his friend informs us) written on the wall of his chamber, so that he could read them from his bed; and, while he read them, the tears coursed down his cheeks.† For hours together, he

* Our authority is his friend Possidius, who says:—"Dicere, autem, nobis inter familiaria colloquia consueverat, etiam laudatos Christianos, et sacerdotes, absque dignâ et competenti pœnitentiâ exire de corpore non debere."

† Possidius' words are:—"Sibi jusserat Psalmos Davidicos qui sunt paucissimi de pœnitentia, scribi, ipsosque quaterniones jacens in lecto contra parietem positos diebus suæ infirmitatis intuebatur, et legebat, et jugiter ac ubertim flebat." And he adds:—"Et ne intentio ejus a quoquam impediretur, ante dies fermé decem quàm exiret de corpore, a nobis postu-

was left alone, giving the whole time to prayer.

If ever a soul was “sick of love,” it was Augustine’s in these hours. “Till I shall come and appear before Him,” he would say, “I cannot choose but weep. My soul is athirst for the fountain of His love; and, while my fruition is delayed, I can only burn, and burn more vehemently.” And again:—“I will not cease to weep, until I see Him: and these tears are to me pleasant nutriment.” And, yet again:—“Then, oh! then, we shall at length behold and possess God fully; then we shall give Him the whole affection of our souls,—we shall see Him face to face—shall gaze upon Him, and love Him, and adore Him, without interruption and without end.”

A holy man once wrote—

“Lord, in my silence, how do I despise

What upon trust

Is styled ‘honour,’ ‘riches,’ or ‘fair eyes,’

But is ‘fair dust!’”

lavit præsentibus, ne quis ad eum ingrederetur, nisi iis tantum horis, quibus medici ad inspiciendum intrarent, vel quùm ei refectio inferretur. Et ita observatum ac factum est; et omni tempore orationi vacabat.”

I surname them 'gilded clay,'
 'Dear earth,' 'fine grass,' or 'hay ;'
In all, I think my foot doth ever tread
 Upon their head."

"I am one of God's paupers," said Augustine, in his favourite phrase, to an intimate friend who had come in, one morning, to enquire respecting any parting directions: "I have nothing but my library, which I desire to be given to the Church.* Any spare money I possessed, I have given at intervals to my relations, as they seemed at any time to be in need. The rest I have shared with the poor saints."

Towards the tenth day, the pain grew more intense; but his patience was not ruffled. "O how I long," he was heard whispering gently, his bright eye fixed steadily upward, "for that blessed moment, when this poor unworthy creature, the last and least of all my Master's servants, shall be called to put off this load of sin and corruption, and, thus disburdened, remove and fix my habitation in the heavenly city, mingling with that harmonious host above,

* Possidius writes:—"Testamentum nullum fecit, quia unde faceret Pauper Dei non habuit."

and doing homage with them in the blessed presence of my glorious Lord!”

The siege continued; and deeply was he moved at the fresh scenes of blood, “especially” (says Possidius) “for so many souls hurried into eternity not ready to meet God.”

Then, longing for a holier and brighter fellowship than belongs to this place of shadows, he would whisper, half-audibly:—“When I shall with my whole self cleave to Thee, I shall no longer have sorrow and labour; and my life shall wholly live, as wholly full of Thee. Because I am not full of Thee, I am a burden to myself. Lamentable joys strive with joyous sorrows; and on which side is the victory, I know not. Woe is me! Lord, have pity on me!”

“Ah! is this dying?” said a holy man, in his last moments: “how have I dreaded as an enemy this smiling friend?” And said another:—“I am not afraid to look death in the face. I can say—“Death, where is thy sting? death cannot hurt me.” And a third, the holy Owen:—“O, brother, the long-looked-for day is come at last, in which I shall see that glory in another manner than I have ever yet done

or been capable of doing.” And a fourth, the heavenly William Janeway :—“ O son, now it is come, it is come, it is come. I bless God I can die. My heart is full, it is brimful ; I can hold no more ; I know *now* what that Scripture means, ‘ The peace of God which passeth all understanding.’ ” As he spoke, the tears began to gather in his bright eye, and his voice was choked with weeping. And, after a little, he added :—“ What made me weep so, was a fit of overpowering love and joy, so great that I could not contain myself ; neither can I express what glorious discoveries God has made of Himself to me. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and, all that is within me, bless His holy name, who hath pardoned all my sins, and sealed the pardon. Oh, now I can die ! It is nothing : I bless God I can die. I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.” And in a few more minutes he was away.

In the dying chamber at Hippo, a heavenly glory not less triumphant shone on the last moments of Augustine. As night drew on, he spoke once more of “ an inextinguishable burning of vehement longing” after the imme-

diatè vision of his Lord. And, “thus consumed” (as the same eye-witness has it) “in the flames of love,” he was wafted upward in the fire-chariot, to see Him as He is.*

It was on the twenty-eighth of August, in the year four hundred and thirty, and in his seventy-sixth summer.†

A few months later, Hippo surrendered to the Vandal, and its Church was scattered to the four winds. But Augustine, “embalmed in his writings,” lived on.‡ The mission of

* Possidius says:—“Membris omnibus sui corporis inco-lumis, integro adspectu atque auditu, et nobis adstantibus et videntibus; et cum eo pariter orantibus, obdormivit cum pa-tribus suis, enutritus in bonâ senectute, et sepultus est.”

And he touchingly adds:—“Ille Vir cum quo fermè annis quadraginta, Dei dono, absque amarâ ullâ dissensione famili-ariter acduleiter vixi.”

† Possidius says again:—“Sanè ille Sanctus, in vitâ suâ prolixa pro utilitate ac felicitate sanctæ Ecclesiæ Catholicæ divinitus condonatâ, vixit annis LXXVI., in clericatu autem vel episcopatu annis fermè XL.”

‡ Possidius writes:—“Et in suis quidem scriptis ille Deo acceptus et carus Sacerdos, quantum lucente veritate videre conceditur, rectè ac sanè, fidei, spei, et caritatis Catholicæ Ecclesiæ vixisse manifestatur: quod agnoscunt qui eum lo-quentem et in ecclesiâ præsentem, audire et videre potuerunt, et ejus præsertim inter homines conversationem non ignora-verunt. Erat enim non solum eruditus scriba in regno cælo-

the great Church-father was, to teach men to lie in the dust before God ; and, though not untainted by certain prevailing superstitions of the day, he nobly fulfilled his errand. He restored to the Church the doctrine of Divine grace.

A soldier of Napoleon's "grand army" was wounded, one day, by a bullet, which entered his breast right over his heart. He was carried to the rear ; and the surgeon was probing the wound with his knife, when at length the brave guardsman exclaimed, "An inch deeper and you find the Emperor !" In the heart of Augustine, and in his massive theology, was enshrined a greater than the Emperor. Graven, in characters traced by the very finger of God, was the legend—which whoso ran might read—"The grace of CHRIST only !"

May the Divine Spirit engrave now in the Church's heart the same holy legend !

rum, de thesauro suo proferens nova et vetera, et unus negotiatorum qui inventam pretiosam margaritam quæ habebat venditis comparavit : verum etiam ex iis ad quos scriptum est, 'sic loquimini et sic fecite ;' et de quibus Salvator dicit, 'Qui fecerit et docuerit sic homines, hic magnus vocabitur in regno cœlorum.' "

